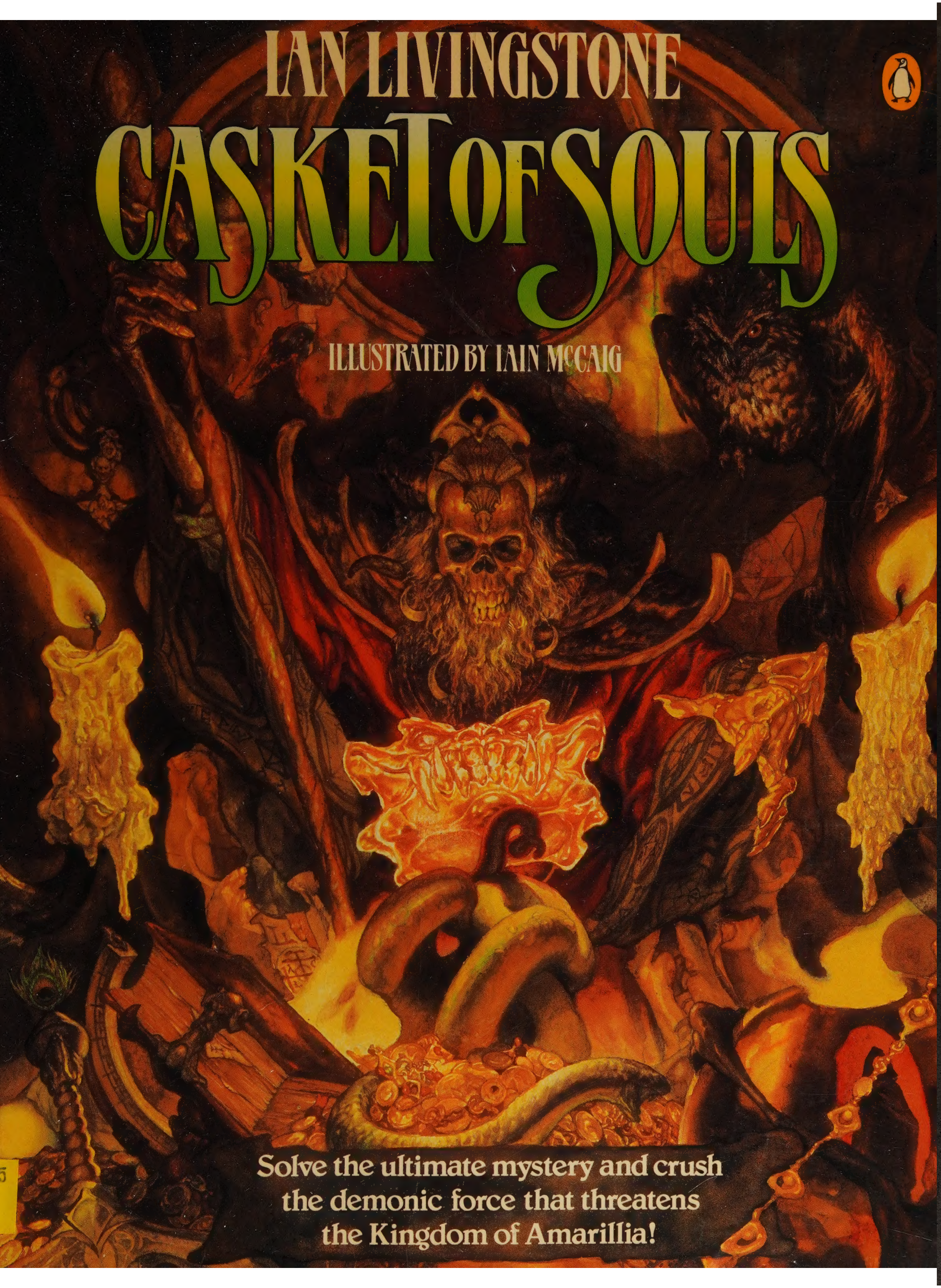

IAN LIVINGSTONE

CASKET OF SOULS

ILLUSTRATED BY IAIN McCAIG

Solve the ultimate mystery and crush
the demonic force that threatens
the Kingdom of Amarillia!

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Penguin Books
in association with
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WELCOME. I had given up all hope that anyone would hear my call for help. You have come although there is precious little time in which to act. The battle against the chaos hordes is nearly lost. I am Sallazar, once grand wizard of Amarillia, and now its spirit guardian. But I was defeated and banished to the plane of shadows and cannot save the king. I am doomed but still able to help you defeat the Lord of Chaos. Listen to what I have to say and look at what I have to show you. It is very important that you study every detail. Learn quickly and victory may yet be ours.

Some two hundred years ago, Amarillia was torn apart by war between the three great provinces. Panassa ruled by men, Barrabang ruled by centaurs, and Grundia ruled by dwarfs, each wanted control over the other two provinces. They fought each other fanatically and did not realise that whilst they all grew weaker, orcs, zombies and other creatures of darkness gathered in strength and waited. The first to notice this was a member of the council of grand wizards to which I belonged.

The Council were gathered together to discuss the grave danger facing Amarillia and arrived at a terrible conclusion – a demon would come from the outer planes to take charge of its waiting servants and conquer the land. We had to act quickly. But first, to deter lesser invaders, we built the Great Fire Wall around Amarillia. It was an immense task. Each of us went to the outermost points of Amarillia. Hundreds of miles separated us. But we stretched out our arms and shot fireballs towards each other. The fireballs fused together and formed a curtain of fire. We stepped inside the fire wall and returned home to Sanctuary which lies on the furthermost island in the chain called the Icecap Islands. Our island later became known as The Cauldron because of the steam which rose from it as the fire melted the ice.

Our second and more daunting task was to make a weapon that would destroy a demon yet would not harm beings with souls. Several suggestions were made, but we knew there was only one sure way of destroying a demon. We had to make a trapping box, one that would suck the demon out of our dimension.

Using crystal, bronze and gold, we fashioned a casket and then prepared ourselves to infuse it with the greatest elemental and magical power. Each with our fingers on the casket we began. Drawing on our energy, the casket began to glow until it became translucent white, radiating rainbow colours. It became burning hot and some of us screamed in pain but refused to let go. To do so would have rendered the casket useless. Yet we knew that eleven of us would die if we held on.

I was the one who survived. I was to be the keeper of the casket that would protect the souls of Amarillia against a demon, should one ever come. I held the Casket of Souls in my hands and stared at it, wondering at the powers that it held. Alone, I questioned whether these souls were worth protecting, their futile wars having caused the death of the grand wizards. But it was our wish.

The next ten years I spent alone in Sanctuary. During this time the wars finally ended. A warrior lord by the name of Thorgar led the Parnassan army to victory over Barrabang, and the combined army of men and centaurs took control of Grundia within a year. Thorgar was proclaimed King of Amarillia and peace was with us at last.

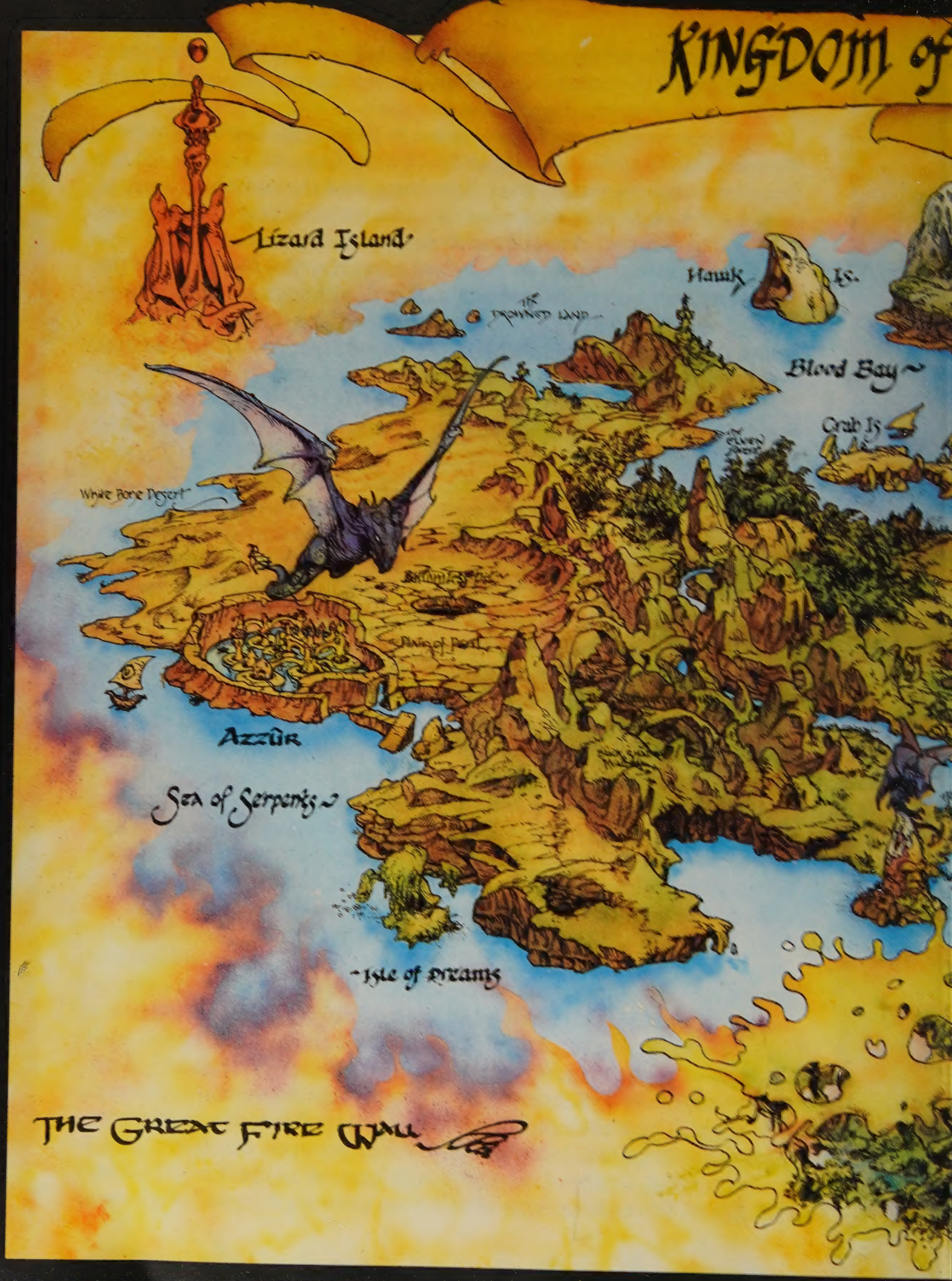
Thorgar turned out to be a good king. He, too, was aware of the increasing numbers of creatures of darkness, although he did not know of the possibility that a demon might come at any time. And I did not feel that I should worry him with the knowledge. After all, I had the casket. But the demon did not come.

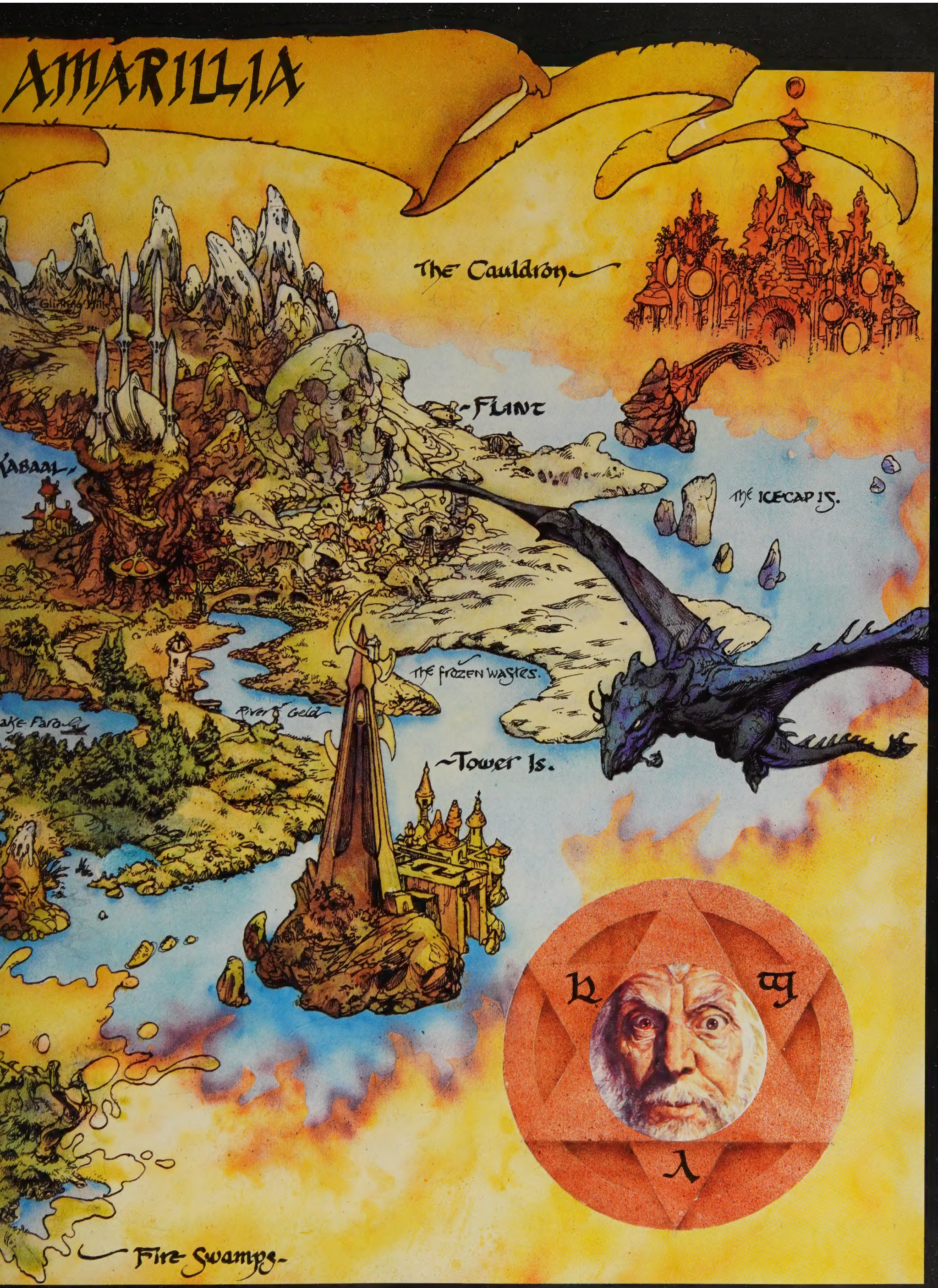
From time to time the casket glowed, I knew the demon was watching and learning, getting ready to materialise in our world. And as it waited, it grew.

Despite the common enemy, peace between the three provinces was always in the balance. So Thorgar commissioned a magic sword that would be a symbol of unity and strength. He named it the Blade of Braxus after his own son and died nobly by it in the ritual of the sword to allow Braxus to become king. Braxus took strength from his father and ruled with authority. He declared that a royal collection of magical treasures would be started, the first of which would be his own crown. One object would be added to the collection by each succeeding king and brought to Sanctuary for safe keeping. For it was believed that the twelve grand wizards of the council were immortal and would forever protect Amarillia.

The years passed by and still the demon did not come. Since the Casket of Souls was made, twelve Kings have ruled in Amarillia and twelve magical objects have been brought to Sanctuary. For twenty decades I have sat on the throne in the treasure chamber beneath Sanctuary, within reach of the casket.

A month ago the casket suddenly started to glow quite brightly. The demon was coming at last. The glow of the casket intensified and then it started to pulsate. This could only mean that a greater demon would appear, one that might even be invincible or at least could defeat me. Fearing the worst, I decided to place a single word of the spell that would open the casket on each of the royal magical treasures. After disguising them, I planned to hide them where no demon could ever find them. There are twelve objects and the spell is made up of twelve words. Should I fail, somebody else could yet open the casket. But I had to gamble. I stepped through a magic portal so that I could scatter the objects throughout Amarillia. I then presented myself as a vision





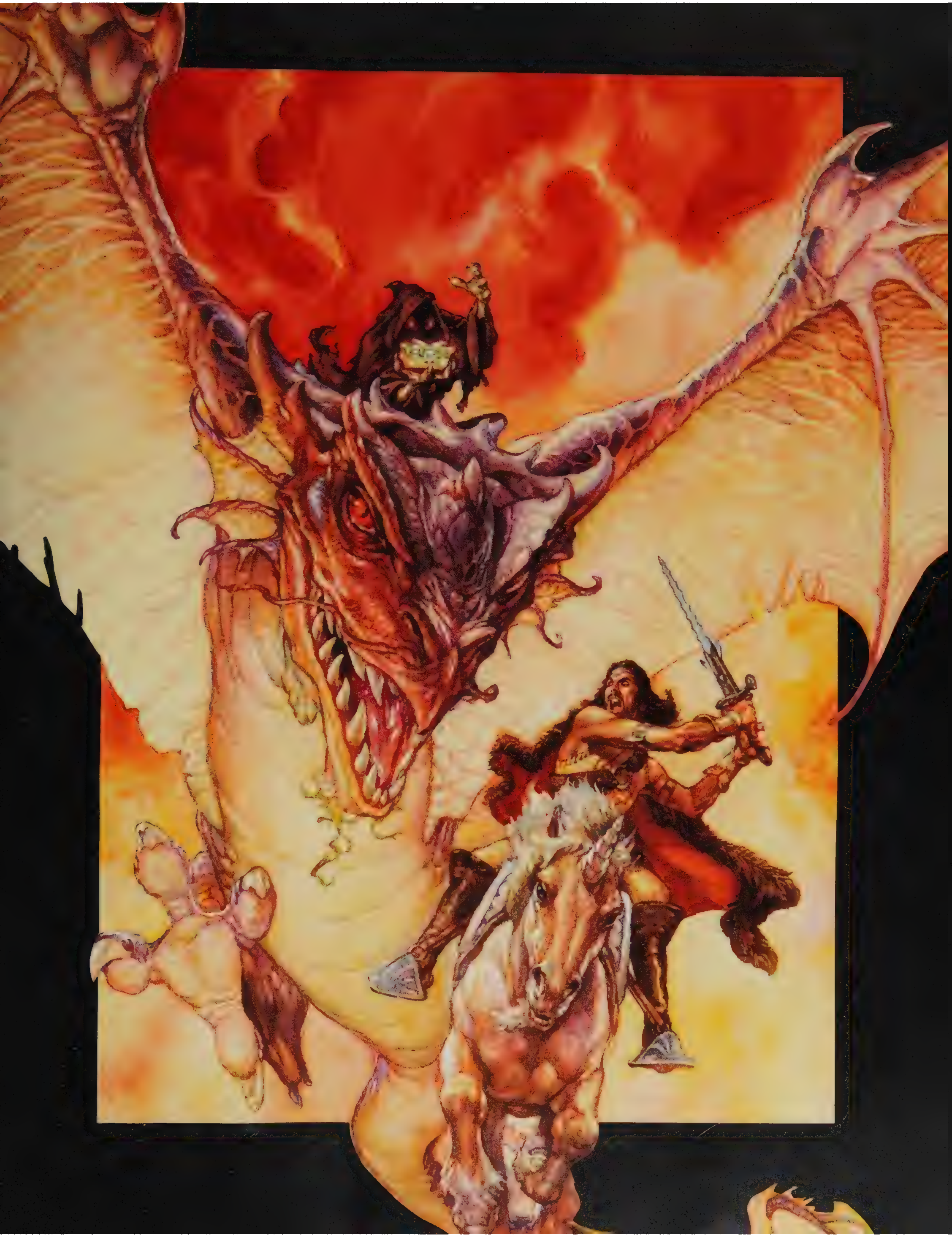
in the dreams of the new king, warning him of the coming demon. King Kraal would know that his dream would come true. All this I did in less time than it takes to blink an eye and yet when I stepped back through the portal to my chamber, the demon was waiting for me. It appeared as a robed skeleton with an elongated skull. It stood motionless, staring at me through its cold eyes. This terrible thing was a Bone Demon. The casket was where I left it, but now it was pulsating as though it might ignite. The demon knew of its power, but also knew that I had to hold it in my hands if the spell was to open it. I reached forward and was destroyed by the demon's malign powers in an instant. My atoms reassembled but I was trapped in another dimension, here on the plane of shadows. The demon picked up the casket and left Sanctuary to raise its army. Amarillia would fall.

King Kraal made a brave attempt to defeat the demon and its legions of orcs and zombies. He mustered an army and assembled his troops at the foot of the Blackstone Hills near Lake Faro. Defending the high ground, he waited for the demon to attack, not knowing that all the grand wizards were now gone. As the soulless zombies were driven uphill towards him by the orc commanders, Kraal rode through his troops on a white unicorn to lead them into battle. In the distance, a dark cloud of swirling war dragons came into view, but all his men cheered as Kraal galloped towards the demon's army. Wielding a mighty two-handed battleblade, he cut through the lines of zombies. But the demon was above him on a dragon and wiped out his mind with the snap of its bony fingers. Under the demon's control, Kraal turned against his own men and furiously began to attack them. Demoralised, his troops turned and fled, most of them dying in the flames of the mighty fire-breathing dragons. The day was lost.

I watched on helplessly as King Kraal was dragged away in irons and the demon gave the order to destroy all life.

I will show you now what has happened since that terrible day when the battle was lost. The carnage of the past thirty days, the pockets of resistance that fight on, right up until the climatic events that happened only moments ago. I will also show you the twelve royal treasures and explain their origins, but you must find them on your own in the visions of the thirty days past where the spell words were first placed. Put the words in the order of the numbered treasures and the spell will open the casket and unleash the power of the grand wizards. Do not flinch in the face of evil for Amarillia's survival rests with you. Look carefully, for all is not quite as it seems. And for your journey you will need mirrors, scissors, pencil and paper.

Time is short and we must go.

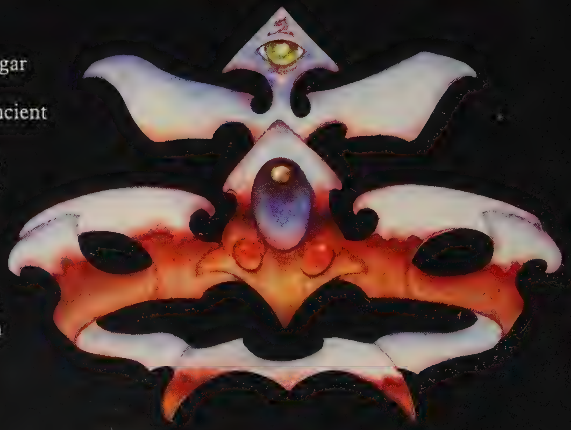


DEMON ACROSS TABLE

WITHIN days of the Battle of Barrabang, the kingdom of Amarillia was ravaged. The minions of the demon slaughtered the people, whose spirit was broken, and burned down their buildings. Wherever the undead walked, the soil turned black, poisoning the land. The new dead were quickly raised by the demon to join its army of zombies which swelled each day and marched?; relentlessly on.

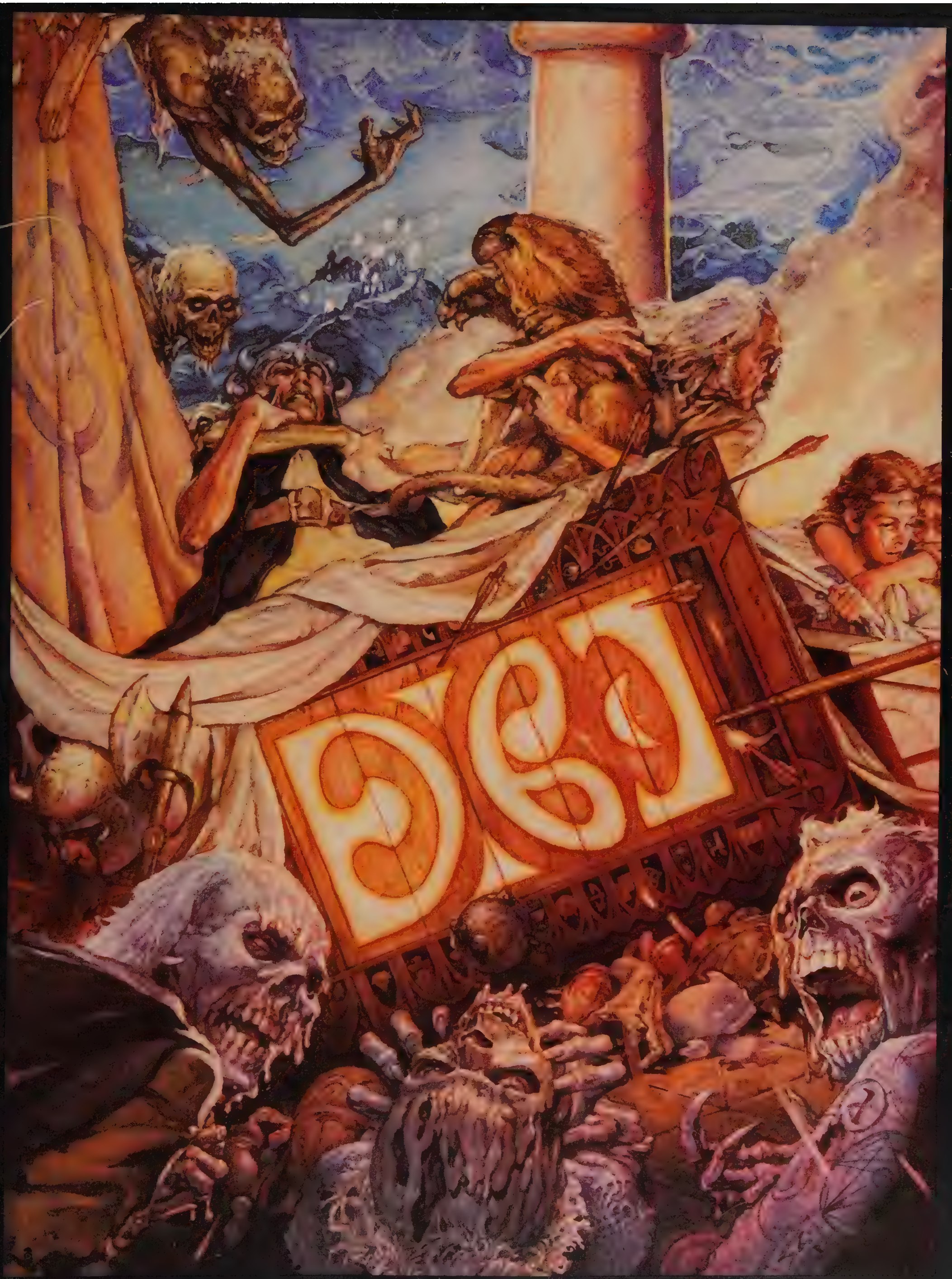
When they reached Lizard Island, there were few guards left to defend the royal family who were taking refuge in Kraal's homecastle. The young Prince Tallis carried his sister Tasha to safety with the help of Lorenzo their guardian. Their only shield was a table with magic runes that could melt the putrid flesh of the undead. They ran for their lives, the prince and princess hoping to find their mother, Queen Hannibalina, who had already sailed to The Cauldron with her new-born son.

THE CROWN OF KINGS was made for Thorgar immediately after the end of the war of the provinces. It was dominated by one enormous ancient jewel that was set at its front, its sparkling beauty mesmerising all those who gazed upon it. But the jewel also radiated curative beams; thus the wearer of the crown would never die from disease. Thorgar was crowned at Castle Argent on Tower Island which became the seat of power of Amarillia. Thorgar built a special viewing chamber for the crown in a wing of the castle so that any of his subjects, no matter from which province they came, could come to gaze at the marvellous jewel. Thousands journeyed from all over Amarillia, many hoping that it would cure some of their own ills. The crown remained on display until King Braxus sent it to Sanctuary together with his father's famous sword to start the royal collection of magic treasures.



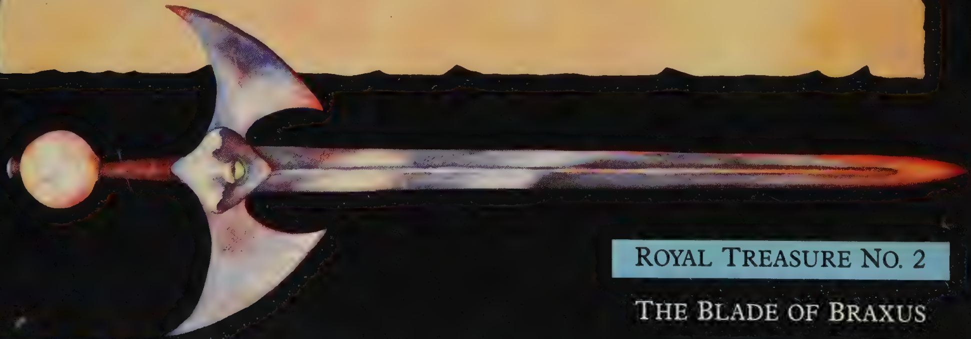
ROYAL TREASURE NO. 1

THE CROWN OF KINGS



HATRED OVERTURNED

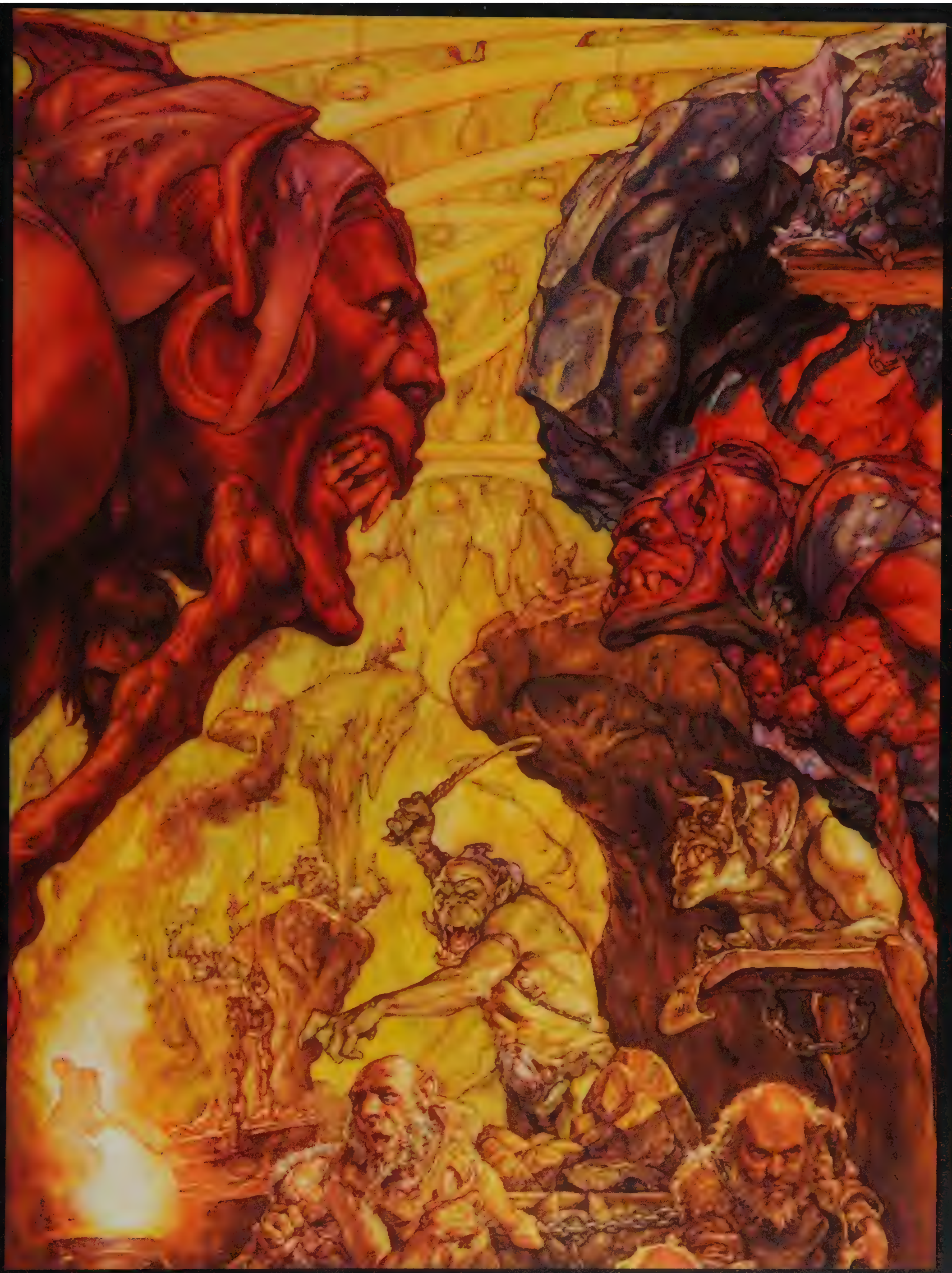
THE demon decided to let some people live so that they should endure a life of misery. Dwarfs were forced to toil in the blue stone mines to destroy the mother vein, and mercilessly flogged if they stopped to rest even for a moment. The demon knew that the mother vein was alive and glowed beneath its blue surface. In the old days, the dwarfs would ask permission of the mother vein before taking some of her stones, but now the demon was intent on her destruction, for the vein represented law and co-operation. It did not matter that the mining dwarfs died from their labours, as the demon would simply raise the dead and add them to its army. Yet despite slavery, their spirit remained unbroken, and the courageous dwarfs whispered plans of a rebellion between themselves. If only they could escape and join up with the last remnants of King Kraal's army. Even without their king, they would prefer to die in battle rather than watch their own slow demise.



ROYAL TREASURE NO. 2

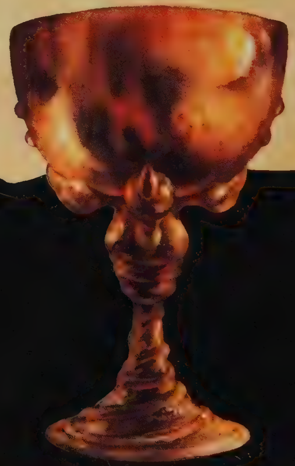
THE BLADE OF BRAXUS

THE BLADE OF BRAXUS was made for King Thorgar for a single purpose; a symbol of strength that would draw allegiance to the throne. He wanted to keep the new found peace between the provinces so that he could commence the fight against the orcs. He called on the best armourer to forge a sword from the finest steel, and then sent it to an old wizard whose sorcery enabled the sword to cut through any metal as though it were paper. Thorgar at last held this perfect weapon in his hands, and marvelled at its beauty and power. The years passed until one evening in Castle Argent, he called his son to his throne room. He held the magnificent sword with both hands and brought the tip against his stomach. Staring his son in the eyes, he said simply, 'You will be king now', and pulled the blade up into his chest. Once more Thorgar had shown the kingdom his strength, and the ritual of the sword became the adopted way of ascendency to the throne.



THIS OPEN THRONE

ORCS were now the dominant race in the land. They carried out the orders of the demon and enjoyed their privileged position. They guided the undead army through Amarillia burning, destroying and looting everything in their path. Once the destruction was complete, they were left to indulge themselves in orgies of cruel, sadistic rites. To ensure their allegiance, the demon gave the orc chieftain, who was known as Thulu, a crown which, unknown to him, was a helmet of obedience. It injected poisons into his brain and made his head swell so that he could not remove the crown. Thulu was unaware of the grotesque protruberances of his cranium through the holes in his crown, for the poison made him think of nothing but servitude to the demon. And in the Great Hall of Castle Argent, the demon let its servant play.



ROYAL TREASURE NO. 3

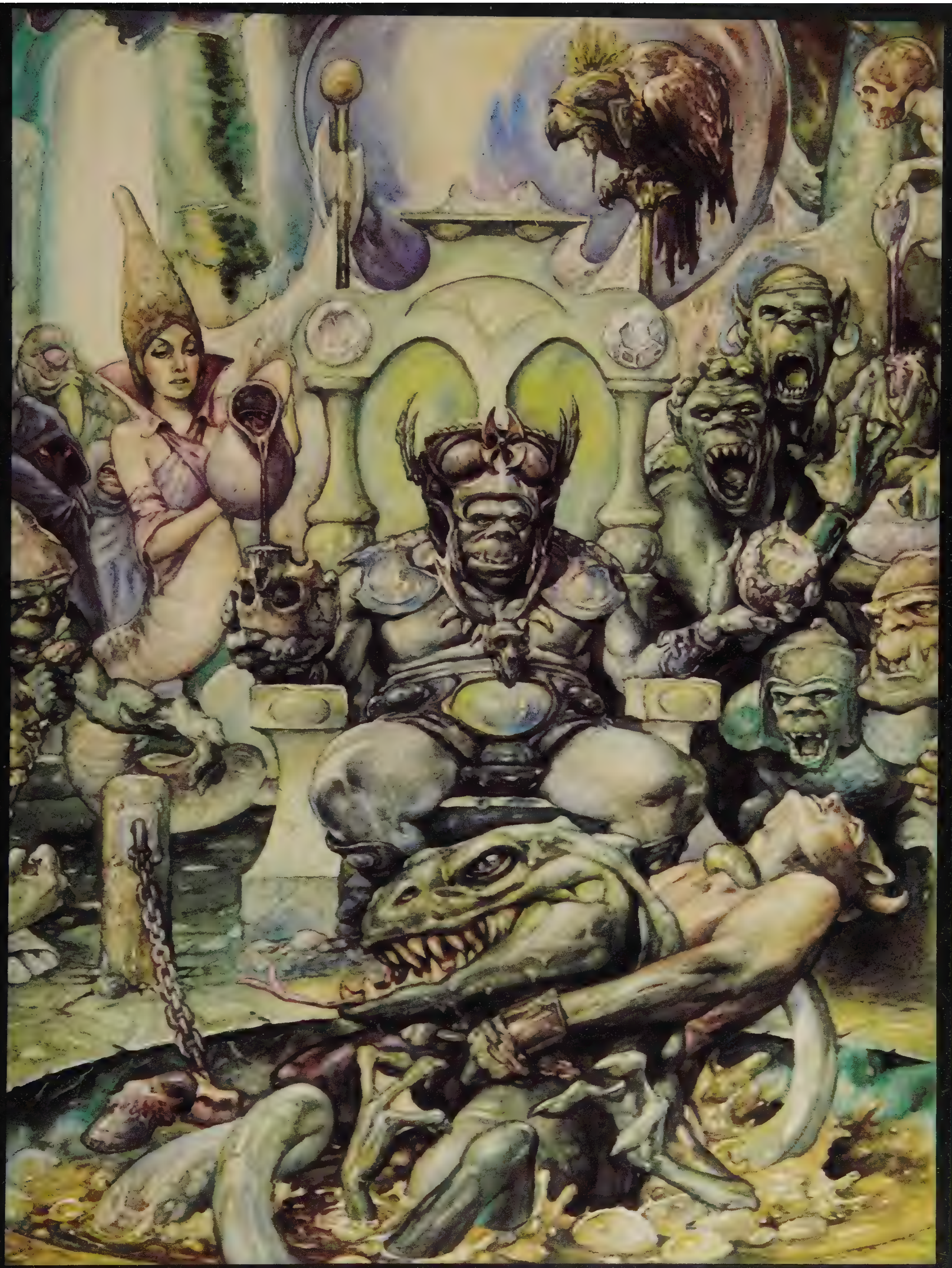
THE GOLDEN CHALICE

THE GOLDEN CHALICE is the most used artefact of all the king's treasures. Fifty years after the death of Braxus, a weak king came to the throne, and it appeared for a time that war might again break out between the provinces.

The reigning king's courtiers began to fear for his life, not because of possible defeat in battle (the realm of chaos had not yet shown itself in strength) but by assassination. They knew that the easiest way to kill the king would be to poison him. Just a few drops of a fatal potion added to a drink, would end the rule of the king of Amarillia.

The courtiers decided to enlist the help of a famous alchemist who lived in a small town on the shores of Lake Faro. They knew that what they were to ask the alchemist to do would require a great sacrifice on his part. There was no gold at all in Amarillia. None to be mined, and near impossible to make, even by magic. Yet the alchemist had for years boasted that he could make gold, even though he had never actually done it, because to do so would drain his magical powers forever. He agreed to the courtiers' wishes without hesitation, and turned a lump of brass into pure gold. After it had been fashioned into a chalice, a druid's spell ensured that liquid drunk from the chalice could never be poisoned.

As for the alchemist, he became a star-gazer, and ended up much happier than he had ever been.



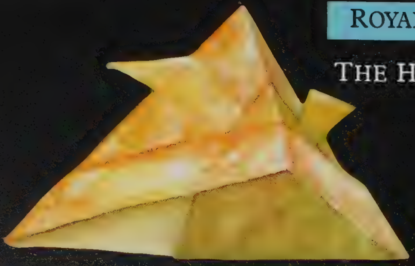
EVIL SPIDERS MATING

MEANWHILE, the demon took pleasure from the twisted development of its beloved war dragons. Two wings of Castle Argent were converted into egg hatcheries, and the job of tending the eggs was entrusted to a mutant orc called Grool. His title was Keeper of the Eggs, and he was chosen because only a training as cruel as his would ensure that the dragons' nature would be forever aligned to chaotic evil. It was well known that dragons were not natural killers, nor even cared for the taste of flesh, but Grool's patient methods of starvation and pain followed by a grisly diet of human and other flesh, succeeded well. The corrupted dragons were thus prepared for the demon's needs.

THE HELMET OF WISDOM was an artefact received with great appreciation. There had been rumours that a man some one hundred and twenty years of age lived in a cave on Hawk Island. He was said to have been the wisest man of all time, but could no longer bear to watch order give way to disorder. In the last years of his life he learned how to transfer mental power, so that he could attempt to use his wisdom in an effort to save the land that he loved.

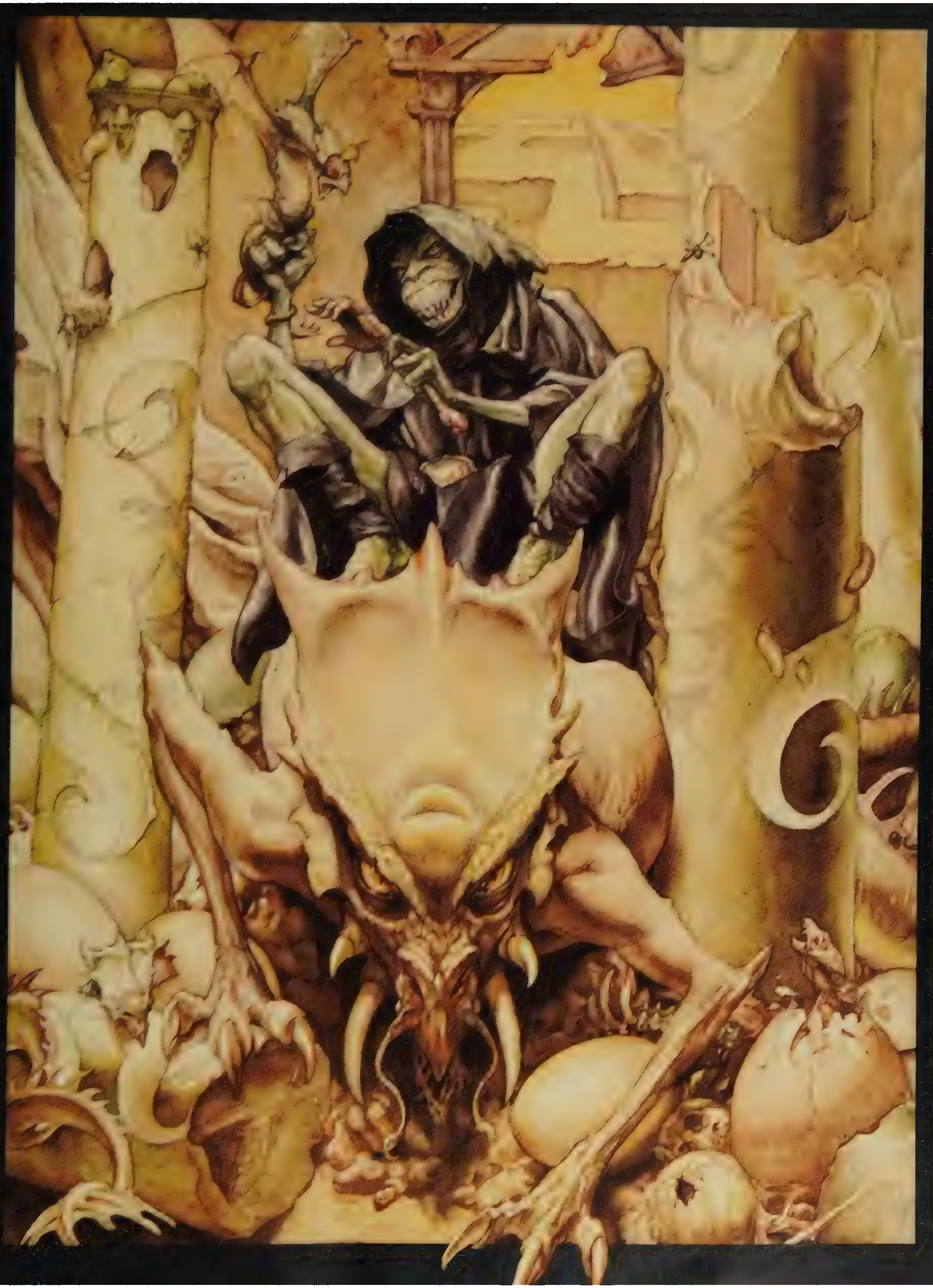
With his own frail hands, he fashioned iron plate into a crude helmet. He walked slowly out of his cave and climbed to the highest point on the desolate island. He sat cross-legged on a rock with the wind blowing into his face. He closed his eyes and raised the helmet above his head. Then he began to concentrate, and the knowledge and wisdom he had acquired began to flow through his fingertips into the helmet. The helmet grew brighter until it shone like polished steel. The transference was complete, and the old man quietly died.

A shaft of green light rose up from the helmet, but it was two months before it was seen by a passing fishing boat. But at last the old man had his wish, and the Helmet of Wisdom found its way to the king.



ROYAL TREASURE NO. 4

THE HELMET OF WISDOM



MIST OF MIRRORED WOOD

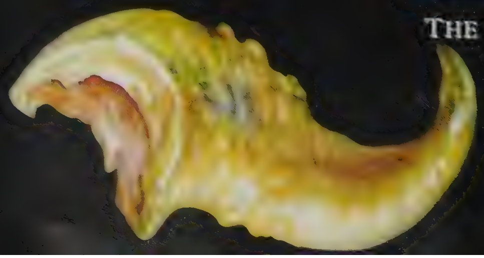
HOWEVER, not everybody was slain or captured in those terrifying days following the defeat of King Kraal. Some took to the hills whilst others hid in the forests and caves. Birds were used to send messages between the survivors so that they could plan their rebellion together. Taking refuge in the Fire Swamps was Astares, the Moon Sister, perhaps the only remaining true seer left alive. On discovering that she had survived the demon, four leaders of the resistance braved the perilous journey across the Fire Swamps to seek her out. Burr, the proud centaur, Brock the stout dwarf, Jarl the giant with his heart of oak, and Anvar the silent and fearless warrior glimpsed their own fatal destinies in the fountain of vision that Astares created. But they knew it was better to die in battle against the demon than suffer servitude and degradation. And so they returned to tell the others of the coming battle.

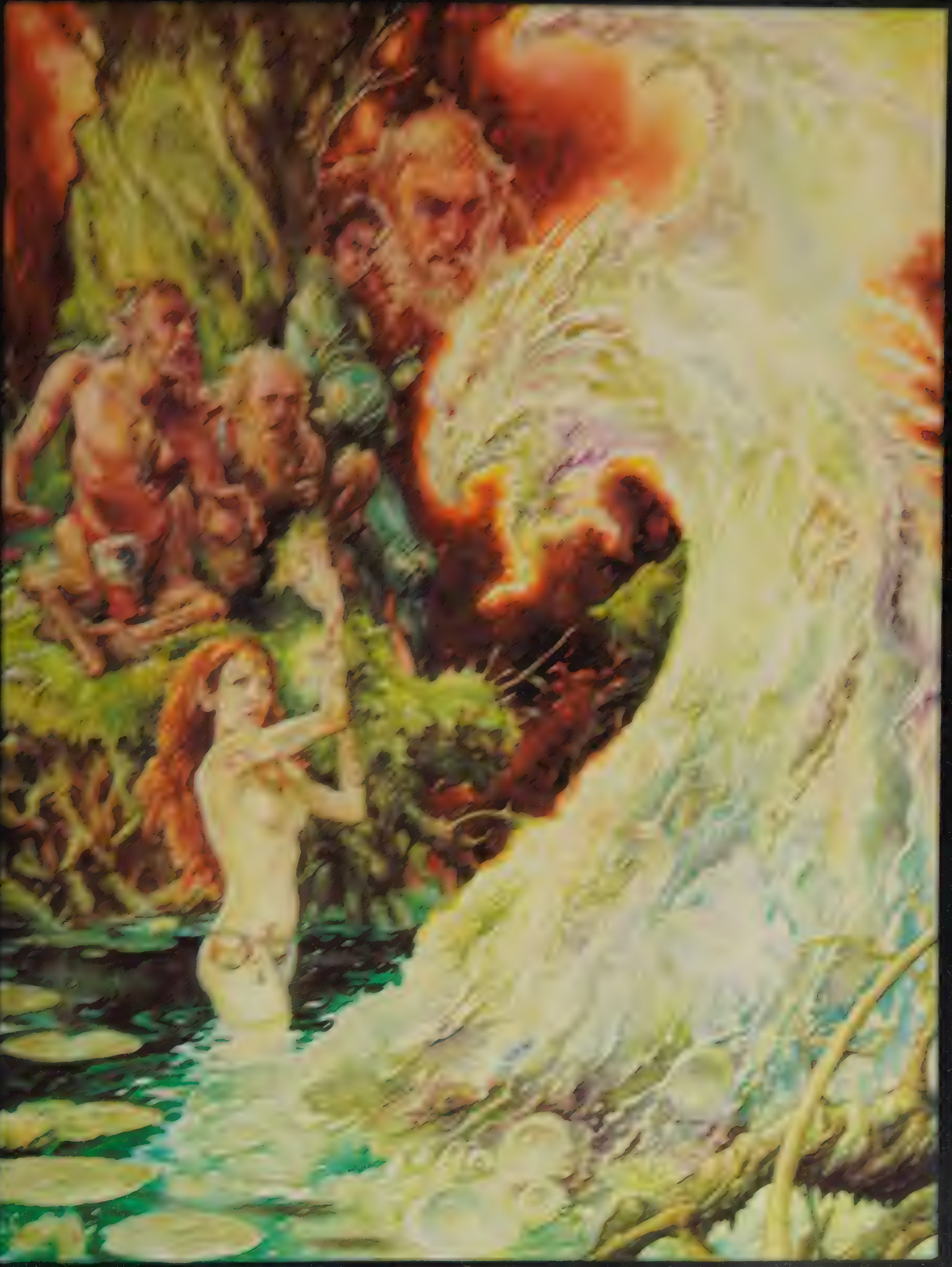
THE HORN OF CALLING was a treasure that unexpectedly came to the king because of an act of kindness. After a terrible storm, a merman was washed on to the jagged rocks of Crab Island. Injured and unable to move, the merman prepared to die. But a small boy from the only village on Crab Island saw the merman from the cliffs above. He scrambled down to the merman and dragged him back to the sea on a stretcher made from driftwood and rope he found amongst the rocks. At first the merman just floated with the tide as though dead, but eventually his strength returned and he was able to swim again. The Merman looked back at the shore just once, and then dived down into the deep blue sea, his tail fin fanning the air for just a moment, bringing a joyful smile to the boy.

For months afterwards, the boy returned most days to the cliffs to look for the merman, but he never saw him again. But the merman did not forget the small boy. Exactly a year later to the day, the small boy stood again on top of the cliffs, and when he looked down he saw a beautiful horn made from a huge opalescent conch shell. It was lying where the merman had been washed ashore. When the boy showed the shell to his father, a message was sent to the king. The boy was praised, for the realm had acquired another powerful treasure – a horn whose calling could be heard throughout Amarillia.

ROYAL TREASURE NO. 5

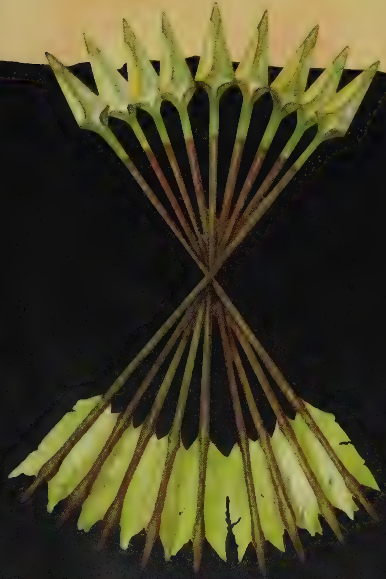
THE HORN OF CALLING





INTO THE INSECT MAZE

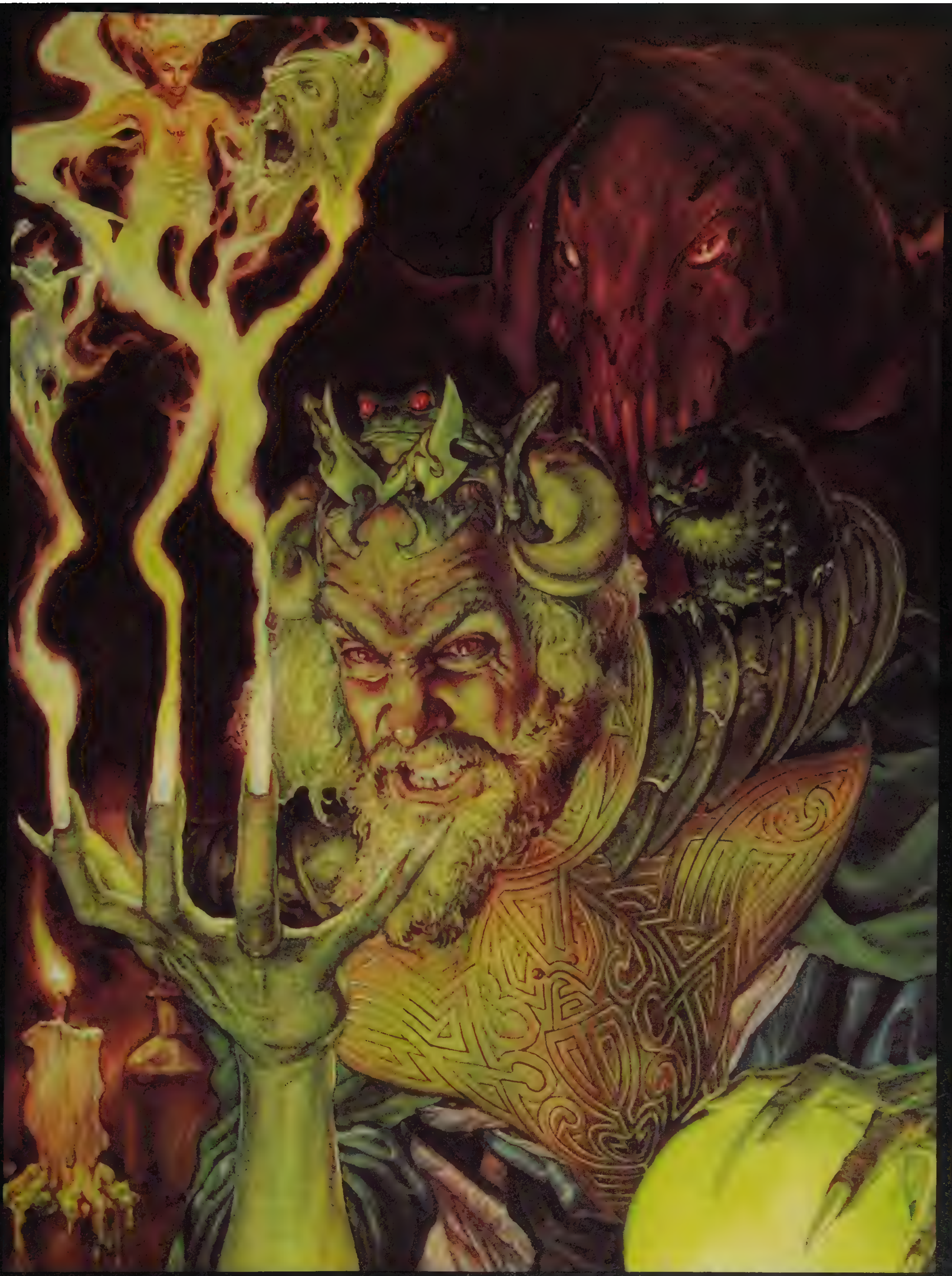
THE wizard Remstar, who had been appointed to the court of King Kraal, was one of those held captive in the dark dungeons beneath Castle Argent. Not even a grand wizard, his magic had been useless against the demon's powers and now, with his mind controlled by the demon, he was experimenting with dark sorcery. Each day he laboured in tortured silence, not even aware that his king was chained inside a cramped unlit chamber nearby. The demon would visit poor Remstar to demand some vile potion or gain knowledge of Amarillia past, present and future. It was yesterday, as Remstar gazed blankly into the flames that danced on his fingertips, that the demon saw glimpses of the coming rebellion. Subconscious voices tried to stir Remstar, but there was nothing he could do to stop the betrayal.



ROYAL TREASURE NO. 6

THE SILVER ARROWS

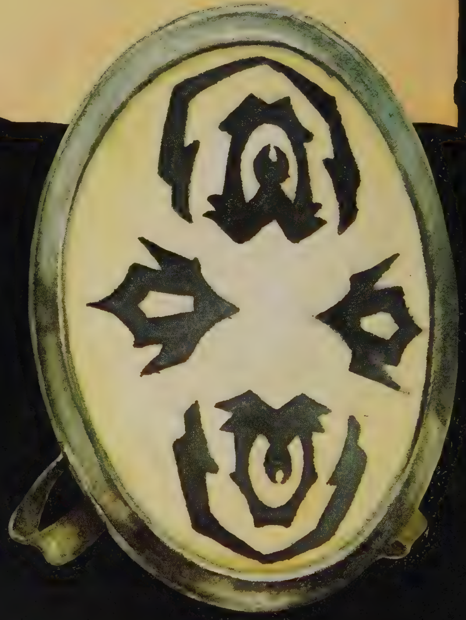
THE SILVER ARROWS were among the last items to be added to the famous treasures. Some eighty years ago, an old dwarf farmer was tending his crops at the foot of the Glinting Hills, when he noticed a shadow pass over the field. He looked up and saw a giant eagle flying over him towards the hills. Fascinated by its power and graceful flight, the old dwarf watched the eagle as it soared away into the distance. But his pleasure was brought to an abrupt halt when the eagle suddenly dropped out of the sky, and fell like a stone into the hills. Angry and sad, the old dwarf set off straight away to find the eagle and discover what had caused its death. It took him nearly five hours of scrambling in the hills before he found the giant bird. Its breast was pierced by silver arrows, but who had fired them the dwarf was never to discover. It was just another sign of the creeping chaos that was spreading through the land. The dwarf realised that no ordinary arrows could have risen so far into the sky, and so he took them to the elders of Flint for examination. It was soon evident that the arrows could never miss a target, and so they were passed on to the reigning king.



BLAST THE DOOR ASIDE

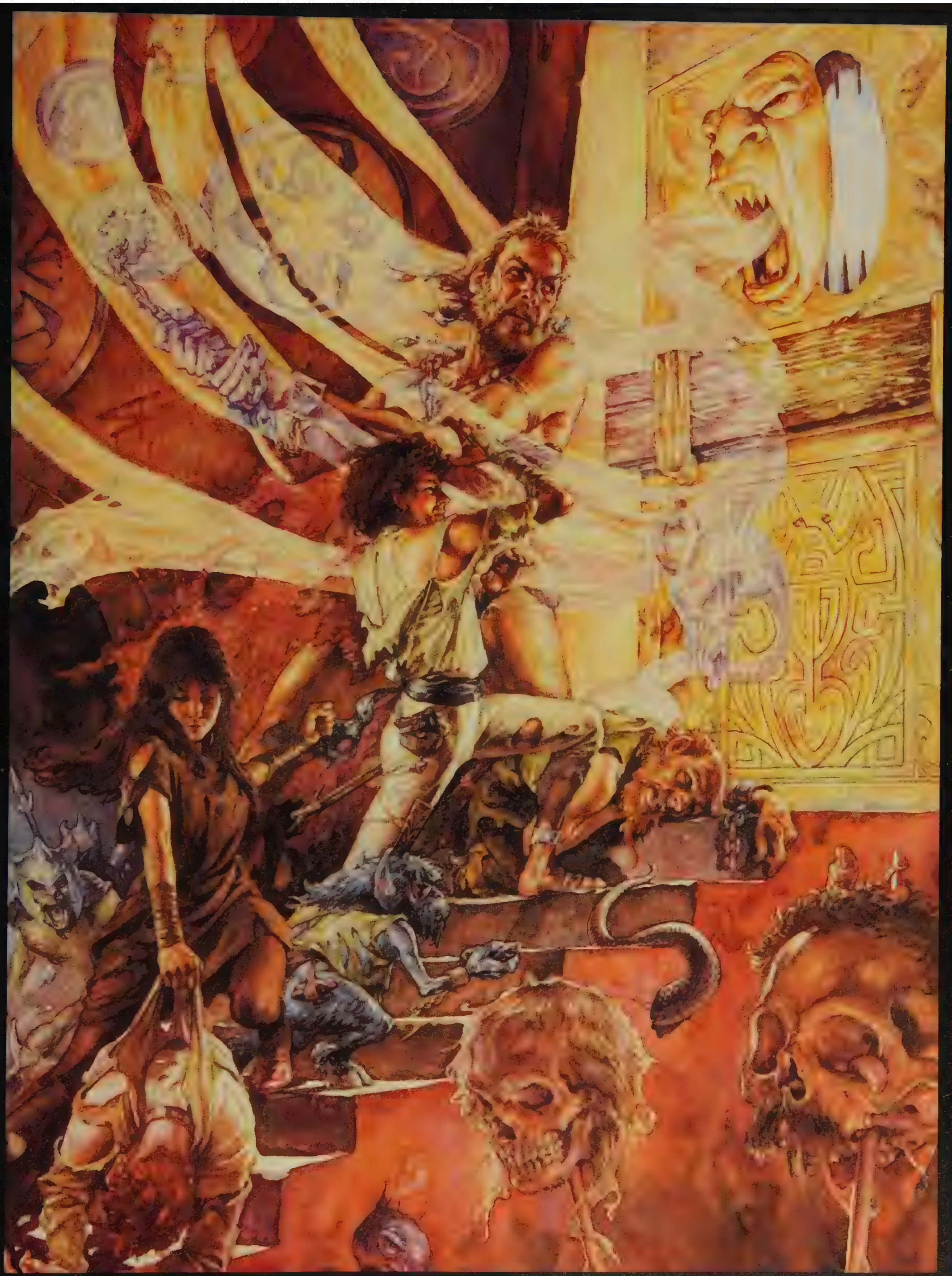
THE news of the Moon Sister's vision spread like a fire, even reaching those left starving in the dungeons or slaving in the mines. The free journeyed by night to gather in Black Shadow Valley to be put into units of an army that would rescue their king. Spurred on by these rumours, the prisoners began their revolt. Even though many were slaughtered by their chaos slavemasters as they tried to escape, hundreds more broke out and headed for Black Shadow Valley. If only I could have told them that the demon knew of their plans and intended to slaughter them all on the battle field.

THE SHIMMERING SHIELD was added to the king's treasures quite unexpectedly. About one hundred years ago, a caravan hired by a spice merchant named Preece was crossing the White Bone Desert on his way to Azzûr. He noticed a glint in the sand some distance away from his camels and decided to investigate in case it was the sun reflecting on the tips of weapons belonging to the desert raiders – his constant fear. Preece rode towards the glinting object, but found no trace of a raiding party. The reflection came from a round metal object, barely protruding from the sand. He was surprised that it caused such a bright reflection, and tugged at it eagerly, excited at his discovery. The rim of the Shimmering Shield was the last thing Preece ever saw, for he was instantly blinded by its brilliance when he drew it from the sand. He screamed in terror and rode back to his caravan sightless, with the shield wrapped in his robes. The shield was eventually presented to the reigning king who would be able to use it with devastating effect if war were to break out again.



ROYAL TREASURE NO. 7

THE SHIMMERING SHIELD



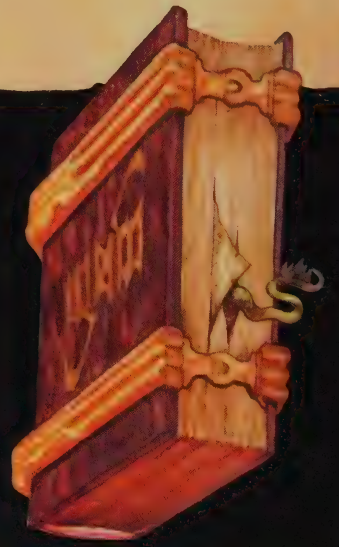
CASKET MIRRORS FACE

THE reason why the royal family fled to The Cauldron was that they knew they would be safe inside Sanctuary. An invisible barrier kept out all intruders. Queen Hannibalina also knew the incantation to gain entry across the bridge to the tower. The spell opened the eyes in the Window of Stares, but sometimes the eyes would remain open for up to an hour, allowing anybody to cross the bridge.

Anvar had seen his destiny in the fountain of vision. The lone warrior journeyed quickly to The Cauldron. He arrived just as the royal family were crossing the bridge, being chased by scores of lava clones. Bravely Anvar took his position on the bridge, wielding his great battleaxe as the lava clones pressed forward. For half an hour he hacked away remorselessly at the clones until the eyes in the window finally closed to reseal the invisible barrier behind him. For another ten minutes he fought on, watched helplessly by the royal family, until at last he fell.

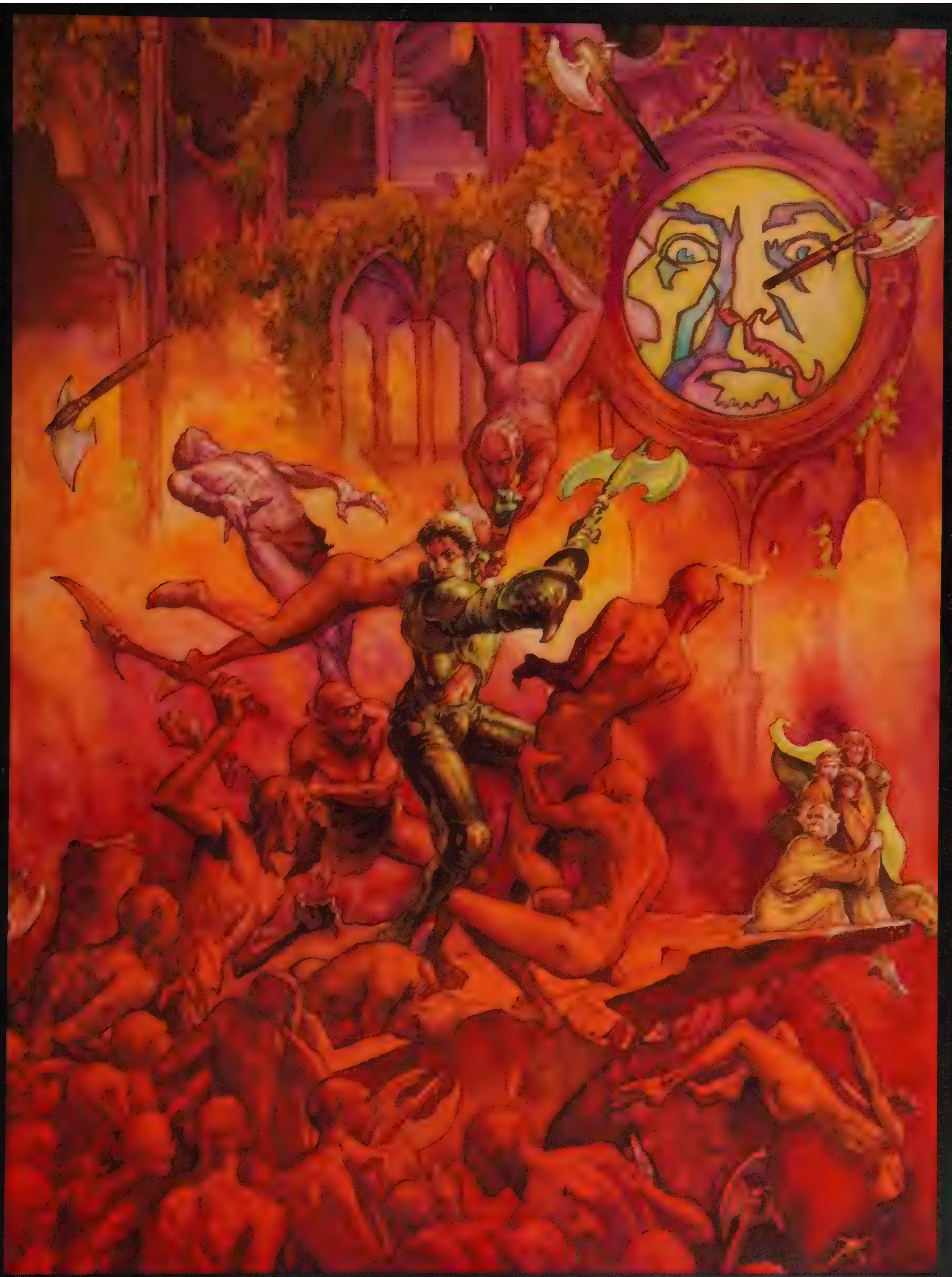
THE BOOK OF MAGIC LORE was found by a group of adventurers who had journeyed across the Worm Marshes in search of fabled treasure. Seventeen of them had set off on the quest, but only three returned.

As none of the adventurers could read, they did not realise that they had found the most important book of all time. The Book of Magic Lore had been written in ancient script by the grand wizards of Amarillia and it held many long-forgotten powerful spells. The importance of their find was only realised several days later while the surviving adventurers were bemoaning their ill-fated and fruitless journey in a tavern. They decided to try to sell the book to a fellow at their table so that they could buy more ale. Fortunately he was a learned scholar, and whilst he could scarcely believe that he held the Book of Magic Lore, there was no doubt that it was genuine. Two days later, the presentation was made to the king.



ROYAL TREASURE NO. 8

THE BOOK OF MAGIC LORE



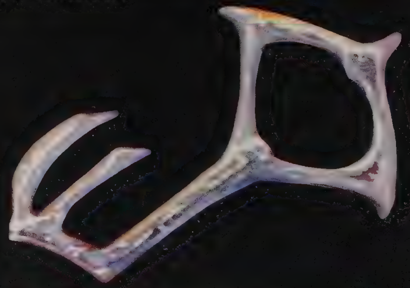
TWIST IN FLIGHT

WHEN the demon saw the vision of the rebellion, its anger was so intense that it beheaded every prisoner in the dungeons of Castle Argent. But many had already escaped, and so Mungus the vile jailer was fed to the dragons for incompetence. The demon then sent messages to its orcs to turn the undead army towards the Plain of Peril where the centaurs were already in position. It then instructed Grool to prepare the war dragons for battle.

Kraal and Remstar were hauled from their cells and led to the castle ramparts where the demon's favourite war dragon was waiting. The demon chained Kraal to the dragon's leg and then sat astride its black horned neck. Remstar stood motionless and did not even comprehend the demon's next order. A sickly, gurgling hiss from the demon enraged the war dragon, and it exhaled a ball of fire straight at poor Remstar, bringing an abrupt end to his poor life. Satisfied with the lethal power of its dragons, the demon gave the signal to fly. Hundreds of black dragons rose into the air, roaring and spitting fire, with Kraal dangling helplessly, oblivious to what was happening.

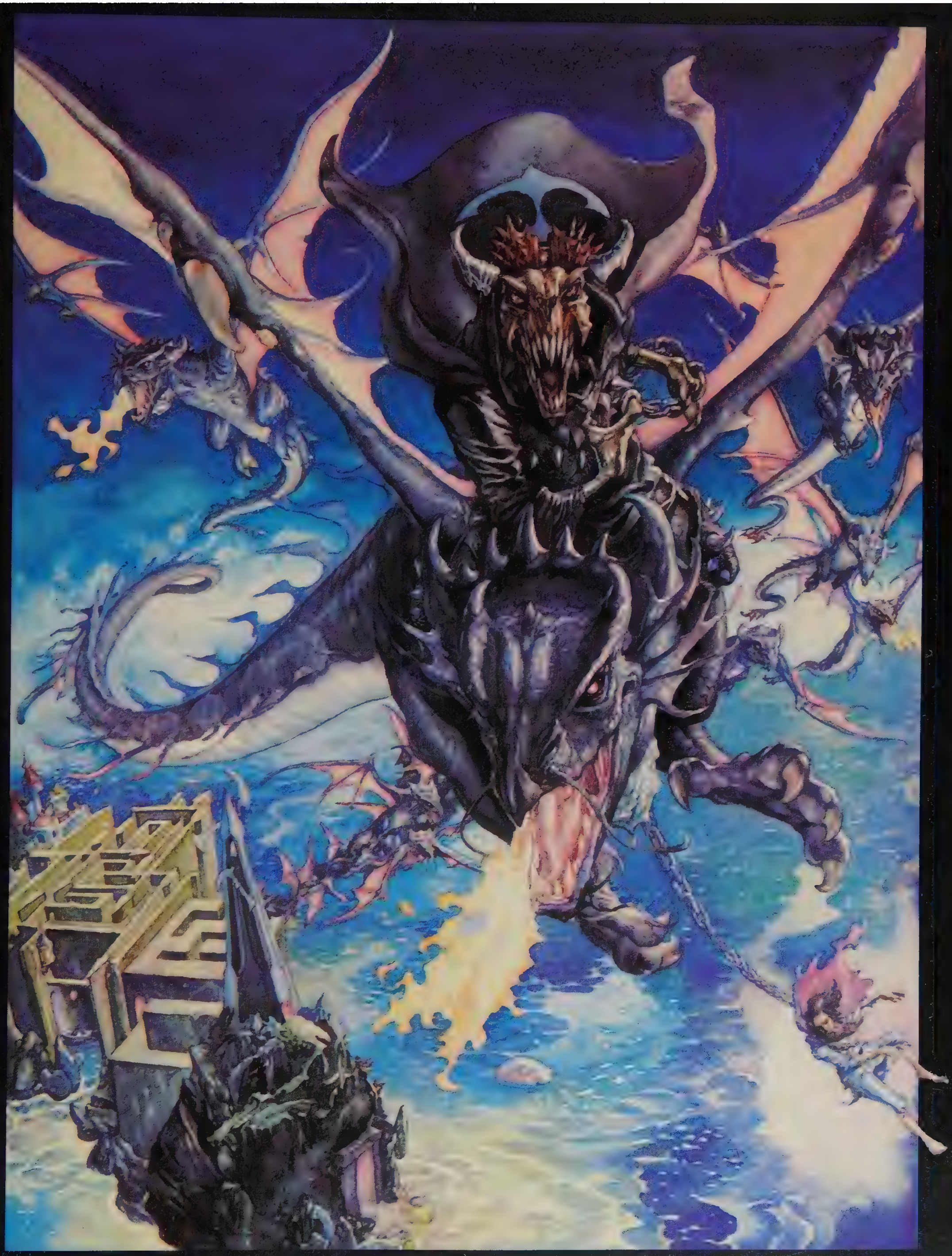
THE CRYSTAL KEY was found by explorers on an expedition across the Frozen Wastes. The explorers were surprised to find a monolith made of ice, and when they approached it they saw a key made of sparkling crystal lying in an alcove carved into the monolith. One of the explorers reached up and grabbed the key, but immediately let out an agonised cry, dropping the key in the snow. His hand was burnt so badly that it looked like a blackened claw. One of the other explorers bent down to pick up the key using a piece of leather. He suffered no injury and placed the key inside his backpack. They decided to abandon the expedition so that the key could be examined, and so returned to Kabaal as fast as they were able.

The king's own thaumaturgists were never able to establish how or why the crystal should burn human flesh, but they soon discovered that the key could open any lock. It was judged to be valuable enough to add to the king's treasures, and the king was duly informed of how to use the key. At least no prison could ever hold the king of Amarillia.



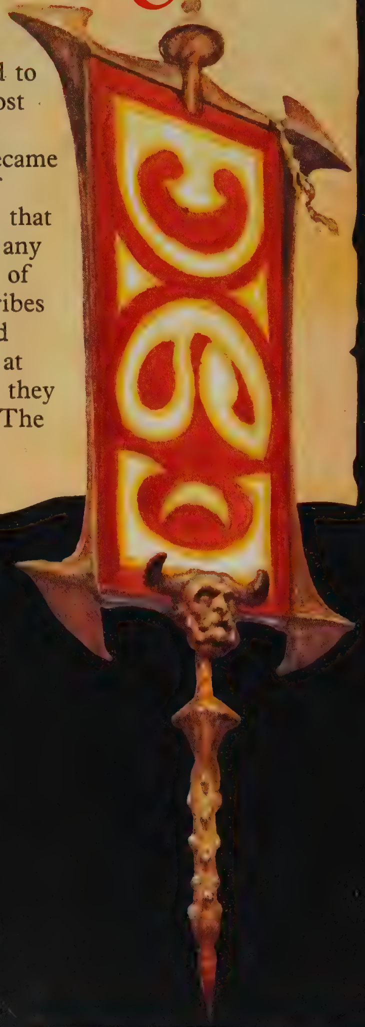
ROYAL TREASURE NO. 9

THE CRYSTAL KEY



KISSED AND HEAVEN SENT

BY now the rebel army had swelled to several thousand in number, almost filling the floor of Black Shadow Valley in which they hid. But the centaurs became restless and their leaders sensed the danger of being trapped inside the valley. They decided that they couldn't risk waiting for further recruits any longer and gave the order to move out. Units of men, dwarfs, giants, elves and even the hill tribes marched together, whilst the centaurs galloped ahead into Wailing Pass, but halted suddenly at the edge of the Plain of Peril. In the distance they saw a huge cloud of dust rising into the sky. The zombies were on the march.



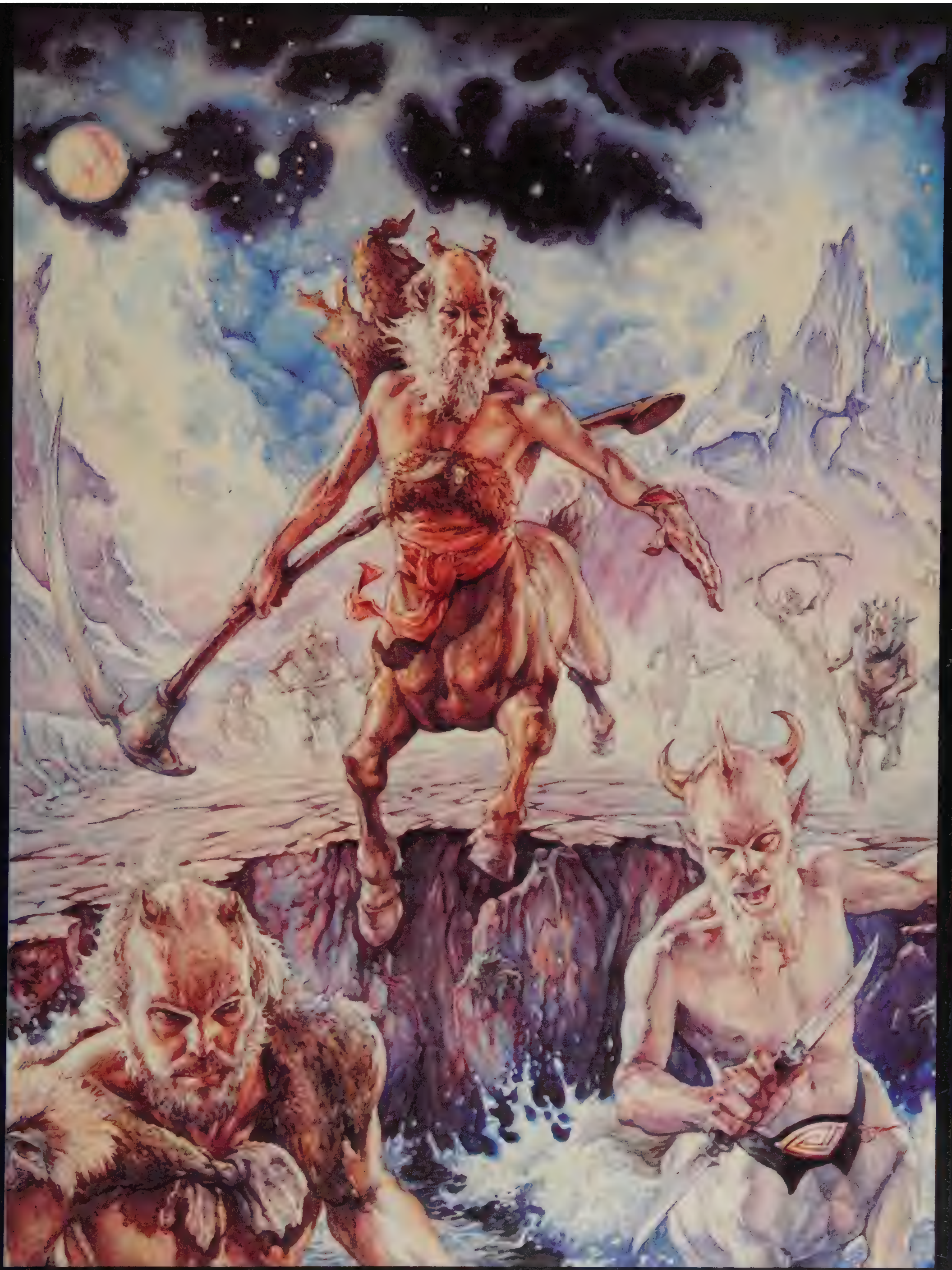
THE BANNER OF TITANS has been the battleflag of Amarillia since the reign of the son of Braxus. It was found in one of the giant caves in the Blackstone Hills, and was believed to have been the banner of a long extinct race of titans. The strange thing about the banner was that it had not faded or frayed with the passage of time, and looked as though it had just been woven.

Its real benefit, however, was not discovered until after a border skirmish with a band of orcs. A general, and good friend of the king, had been struck down by an arrow from one orc's bow. When the king went to his side, he saw that there was little hope. He took the Banner of Titans and spread it like a blanket over his friend, to comfort him. In less than a minute, the general's wounds were healed and he was able to rejoin his soldiers.

Although only used on rare occasions, the healing powers of the banner saved the lives of two kings in later years.

ROYAL TREASURE NO. 10

THE BANNER OF TITANS

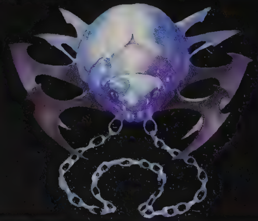


HISSED AT PAPER SHIELDS

INSIDE the pass the rebels watched silently as the demon dragged King Kraal through the dirt in chains behind it. This was too much for the rebels to bear, and they swarmed out of the pass to save their king. At once the demon took flight, leaving Kraal with its minions so that it could direct the battle from above. It ordered its orcs to urge the undead forward to meet the disorganised rebels charging towards them. The fighting was fierce, and although outnumbered, the rebels held their own ground for the first hour of the battle. The charging centaurs managed to break through the packed ranks of undead in several places and the giants following behind crushed the zombies underfoot. The elven archers closed in and loosed their bows at the orc guards' flanks. Volley after volley of arrows rained down on them and it looked for a while as if the orcs might break and flee. The men and dwarfs attacked doggedly on foot, wielding their swords and axes, stepping over the twitching limbs of the fallen zombies and orcs. But the demon still held its war dragons in reserve, and now it gave the signal for them to fly into the melée. Their killing power was awesome. Crushing, clawing and burning, they decimated the rebel army. Panic spread throughout, and the rebels died by the hundred. Forming a last desperate circle to hold back the demon's army, they began to chant 'Kraal! Kraal! Kraal!' at the top of their voices.

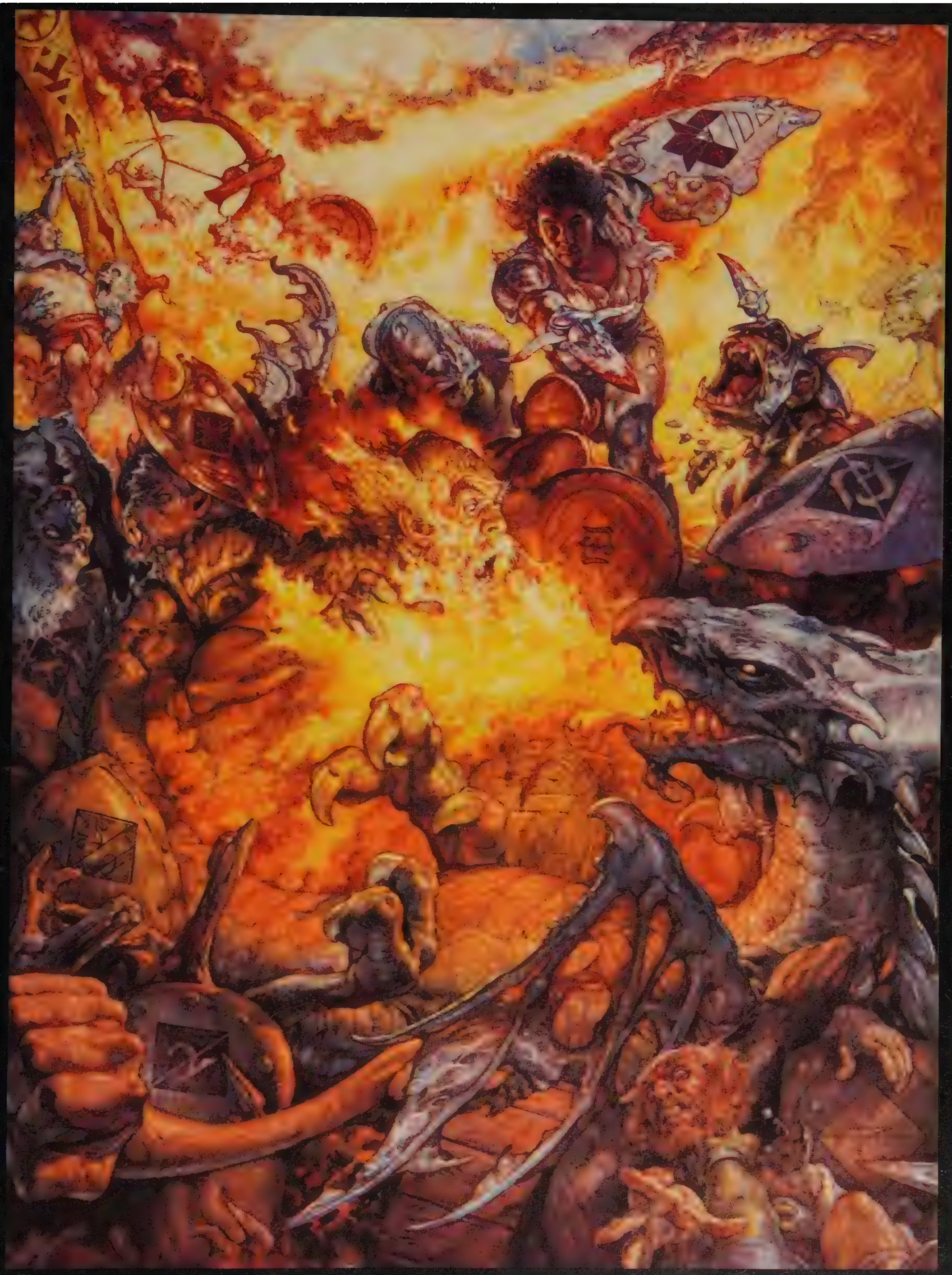
This happened only minutes ago!

THE AMULET OF COURAGE was given to the crown by an old centaur knight called Ironhoof. It was made of copper, a metal almost as rare as gold in Amarillia, and was said to have come from a land beyond the Great Fire Wall. The centaur had been galloping along the beach of Blood Bay near Kabaal, when he saw a bottle bobbing in the water. He waded into the sea and saw that the bottle contained what he thought was a metal ornament of some kind. He uncorked the bottle and out dropped the mysterious copper amulet, fashioned in the shape of a beetle. With some apprehension, Ironhoof placed the amulet around his neck. Despite his age, he felt suddenly filled with courage, and when he returned to his village, all those in sight of the amulet were also filled with fighting spirit. But the centaurs began to fear the amulet, as they did not want to be the cause of another war between the provinces, and so they took the amulet to the king.



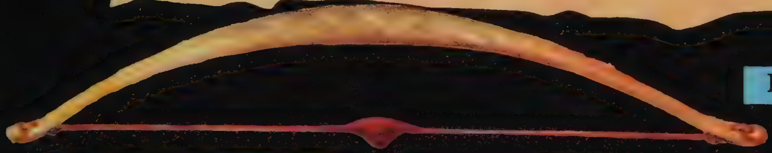
ROYAL TREASURE NO. 11

THE AMULET OF COURAGE



DARKNESS REFLECTS THE PIT

AND this is the present. What you see here is happening now. The battle is all but lost. Kraal's few remaining warriors have been pushed back to the edge of The Bottomless Pit. Listen to their howling screams as they fall whilst the demon looks down from above revelling in its absolute power. Yet our moment has come. Look to the horizon, you can just see a glowing object flying towards us. It is Astares, the Moon Sister, consumed in a ball of burning gases. She knows you are here and is shooting through the skies like a fireball, her powers concentrated into one final cataclysmic effort. Already she is beginning to dissolve in bursts of flame, but the demon has not yet seen her. Look! She has snatched the Casket of Souls from the demon's grasp and dropped it down the pit. Quick, you must reach it first for whilst it is out of the demon's hands it can be opened.



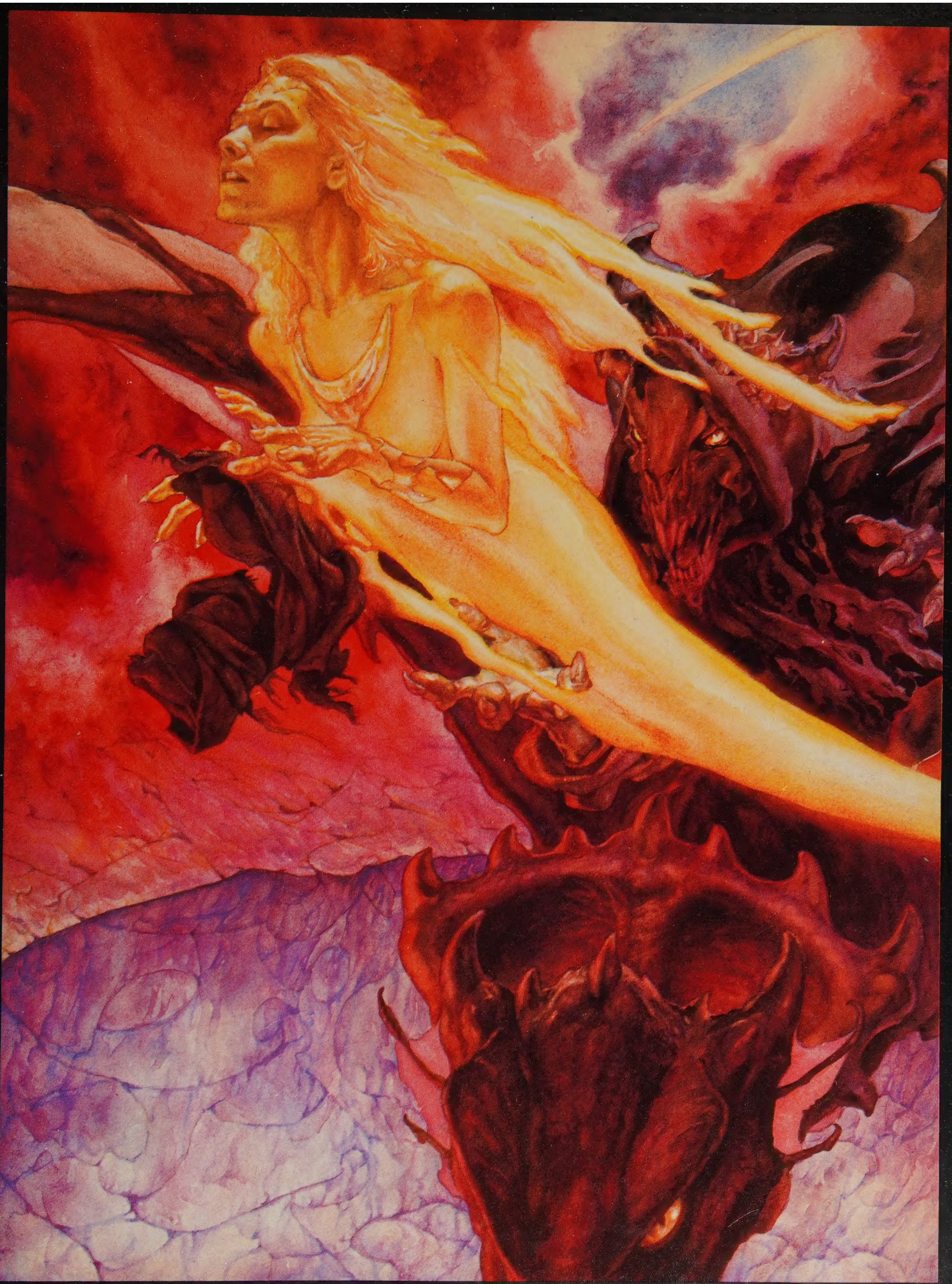
ROYAL TREASURE NO. 12

THE WHITE ASH BOW

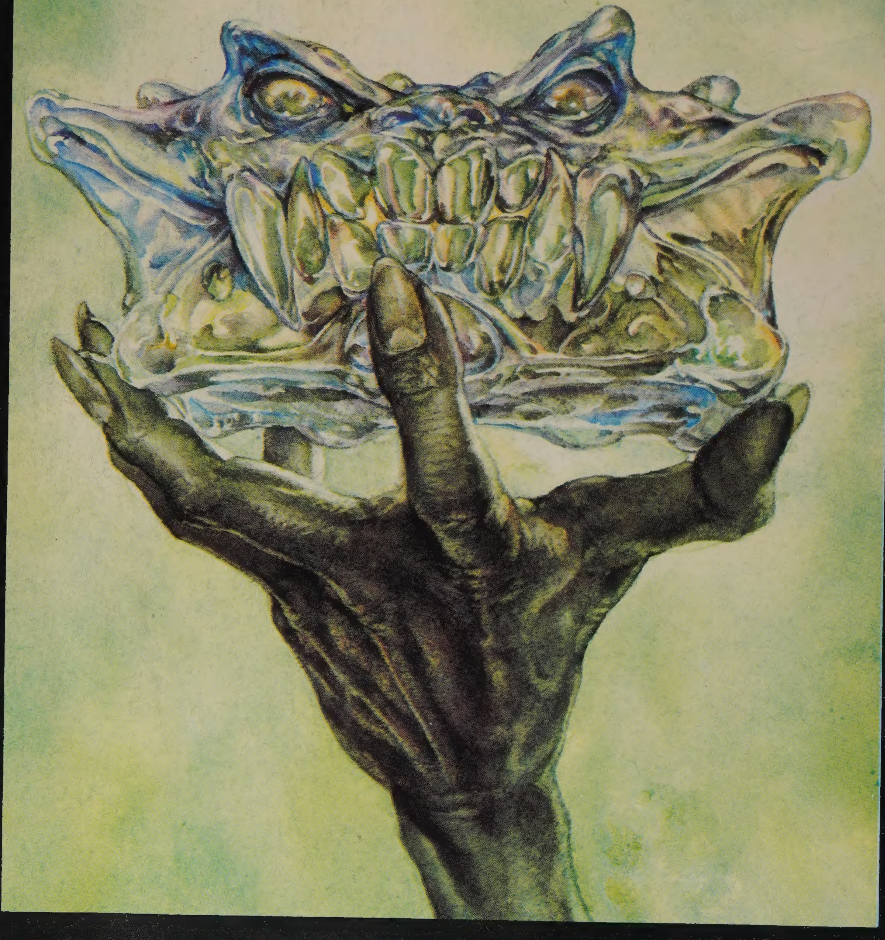
THE WHITE ASH BOW was made by the elves of Elven Forest for King Kraal, who had been given the Silver Arrows by the Grundian dwarfs. Even though Amarillia had remained unified ever since the days of Thorgar, elves and dwarfs had remained suspicious of one another, as they had always done. Without wishing to show undue favour to either of the races, Kraal wisely decided to ask the elves to make the bow. Elves would have been his first choice as makers of the bow in any case, but Kraal led the elves to believe that he had bestowed a great honour upon them.

In great numbers they searched the darkest depths of Emerald Forest until they found the rare White Ash tree. It was stripped of all of its great branches, which were cut off and taken to their master bowmaker, amidst much cheering and rejoicing. The bowmaker selected the best branch and began to fashion it into a bow. He spent nearly a week carving and shaving the branch into a perfectly straight pole, an elf's height in length, and tapered at both ends. When he was finally satisfied that his work was complete, he slipped the bowstring into the bottom notch and then pressed down on the upper end of the bow until the top loop of the string could slip into place.

At last he called for an arrow, and everybody assembled to watch. The master bowmen bent the bow and let fly the arrow into the air. It climbed swiftly with a soul-chilling howl and disappeared from view. The bow had incredible power. Before it was presented to Kraal, the elves burnt a ceremonial fire with the remaining branches of the White Ash Tree, so that no one else could make a White Ash Bow.



DO not be alarmed, this is my hand that has caught the casket. This is as far as I can reach into the world from the plane of shadows. Take it now and shout the spell to open it. The demon will be here in seconds.



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And when the demon came, I awoke ready to trap it with the casket. But I gambled and lost. I was obliterated and rematerialised on the plane of shadows, unable to escape.

Yet the demon can still be annihilated by the casket. There is a hidden spell that can open it. I will lead you to it. Please help for there is no other hope left to us.

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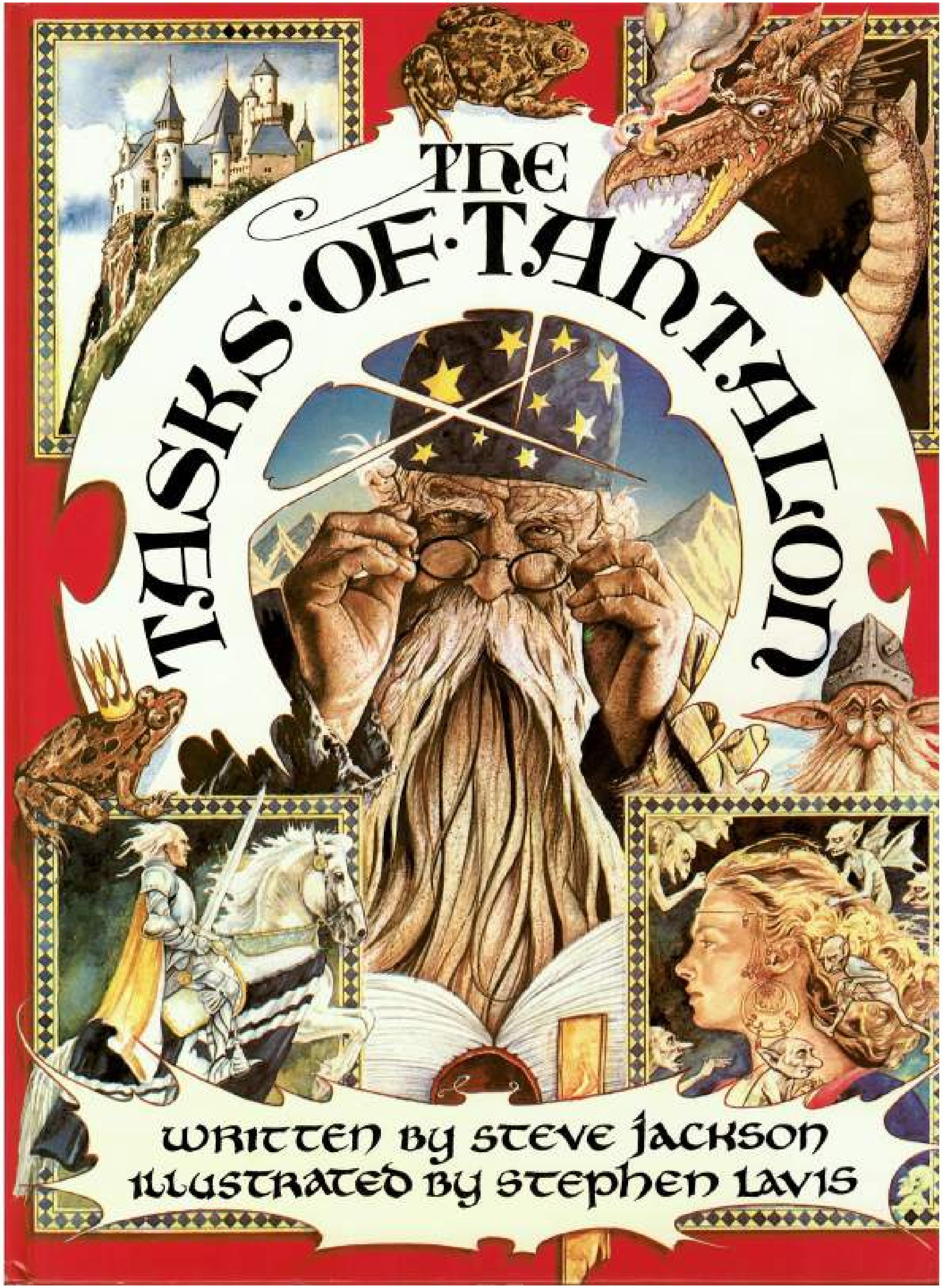
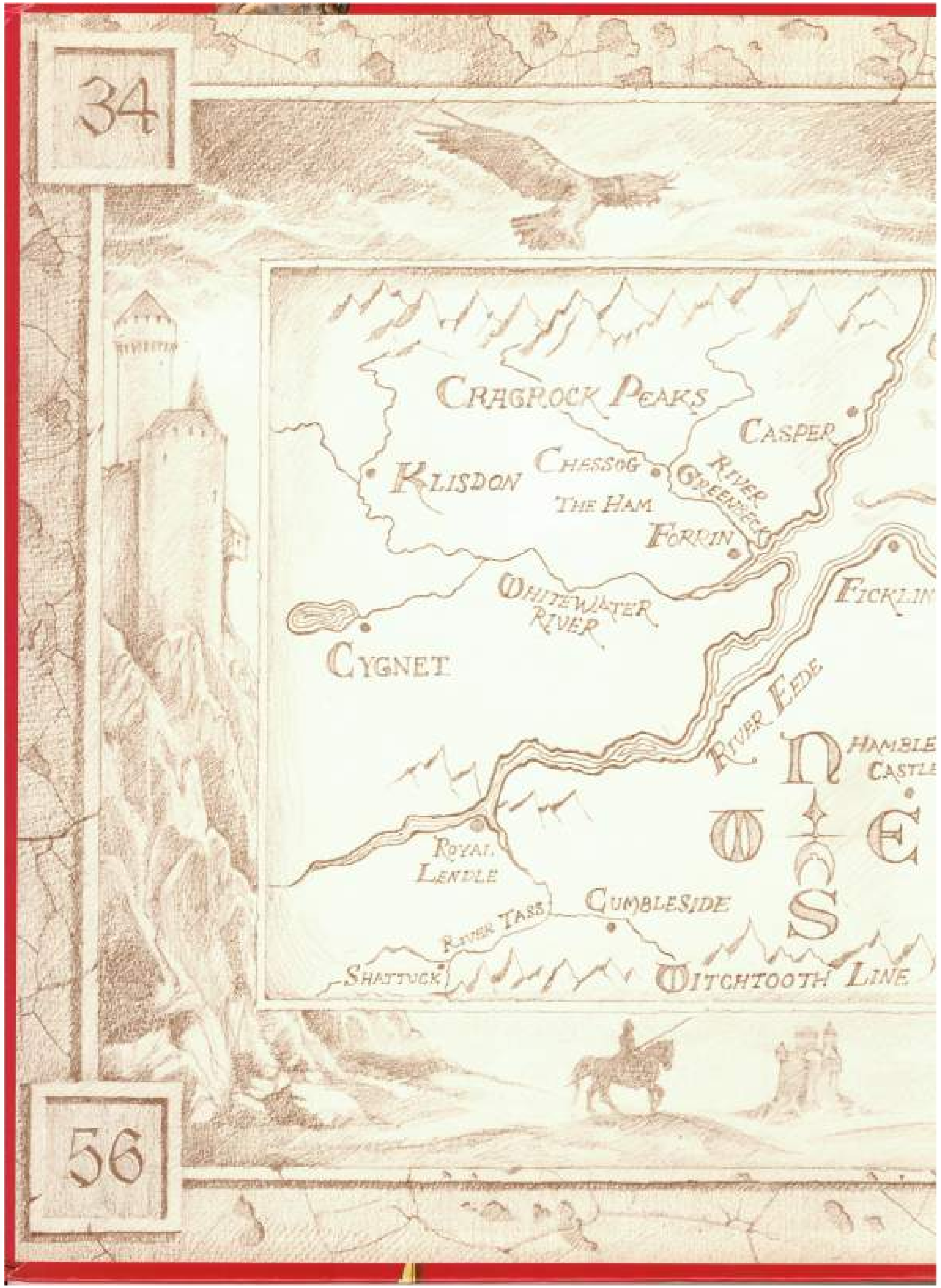


THE TASKS·OF·TANTALON

WRITTEN BY STEVE JACKSON
ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHEN LAVIS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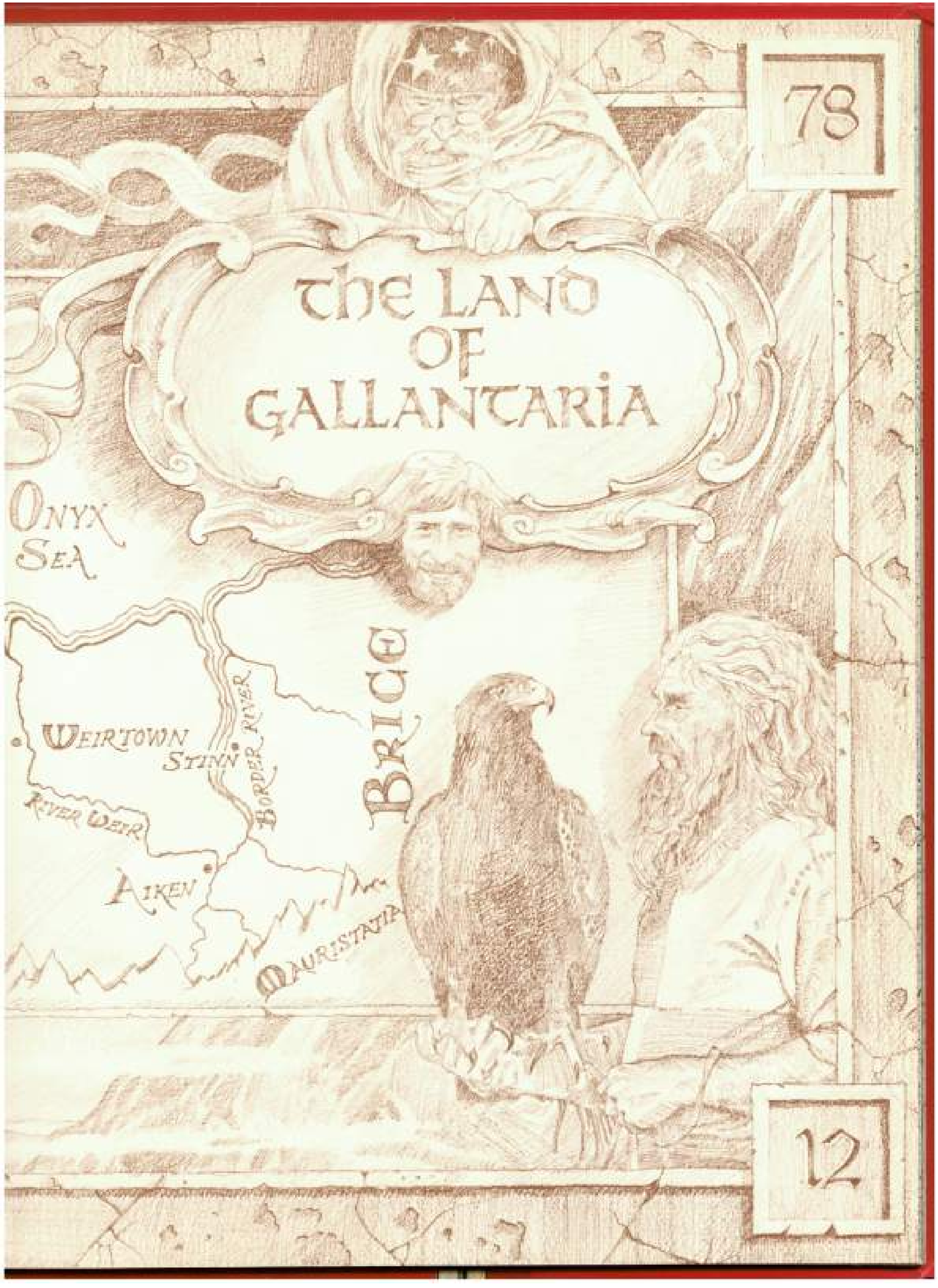
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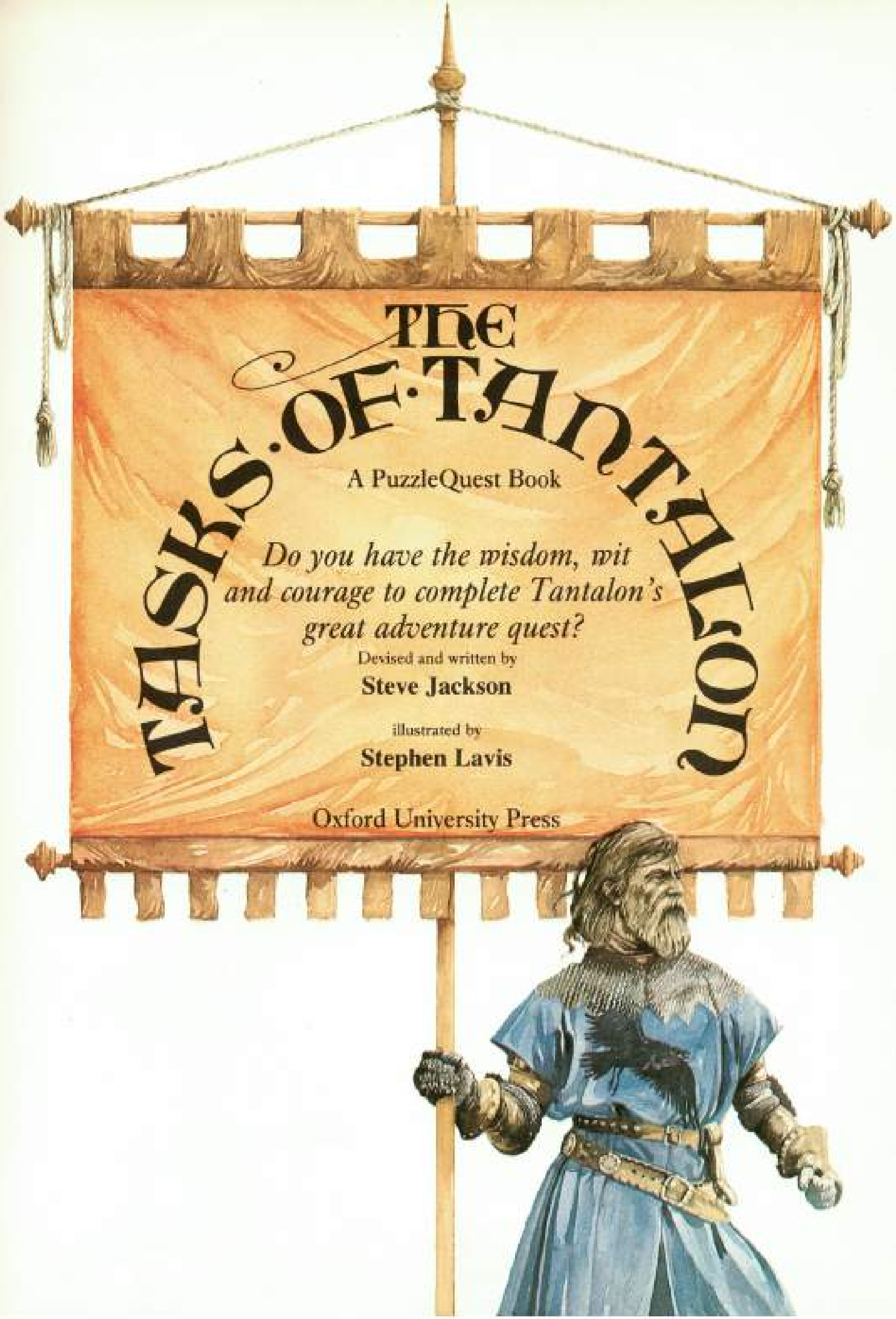


THE TASKS·OF·TANTALON

A PuzzleQuest Book

Do you have the wisdom, wit and courage to complete Tantalon's great adventure quest?

Devised and written by
Steve Jackson

illustrated by
Stephen Lavis

Oxford University Press

THE TASKS OF TANTALON

THE War of the Four Kingdoms was over!

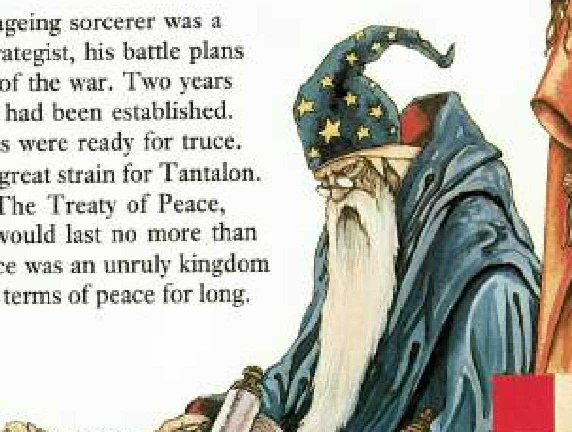
Tantalon replaced his quill. The Treaty of Peace had been negotiated, agreed and was now sealed in writing. The four nobles rose to their feet. A fanfare sounded as the others turned away from the ageing wizard and walked towards the door. Slowly and deliberately Tantalon lowered himself into his seat and sighed. . . .

The war had been long and bloody, a senseless waste of life. The death toll had even taken Gallantaria's own King Constain and his Queen, ambushed and butchered by Northlanders in Narrow Pass. This tragedy had dealt a severe blow to the Kingdom of Gallantaria. The King had left no heirs. Who was to rule?

An emergency meeting of the Knights of the Inner Council was called. There was much vying for power as the knights argued. For two days and nights the debate continued fruitlessly. Finally it was the bearded Sir Duke who suggested that the Crown be held by Tantalon, Sorcerer of the Court.

Tantalon—a wise man whose loyalty to Gallantaria was beyond question, a man whose devotions to the mystic arts placed him above their own mundane political ambitions. Tantalon was a prime candidate. The matter was quickly agreed.

As it turned out, the ageing sorcerer was a fine choice. A brilliant strategist, his battle plans altered the whole course of the war. Two years later, Gallantaria's power had been established. The other three kingdoms were ready for truce. But the war had proved a great strain for Tantalon. His strength was fading. The Treaty of Peace, though formally signed, would last no more than a year. Neighbouring Brice was an unruly kingdom and would not hold to its terms of peace for long.



Tantalon realized that his successor must be found, and quickly, before the scheming Inner Council usurped the throne.

This was one problem, but there were many others. During the war, affairs of the homeland had been neglected. And many affairs needed attention—too many for an old man. Tantalon was deep in thought. Which were the most pressing?

Undoubtedly, recovery of the Crystal of Supremity was imperative. Pilfered in the Ham on its way to Lendle, the regency jewel had fallen into the hands of the wicked man-bull when the plundering thieves unwittingly chose the Minotaur's labyrinth as a hiding place. This heirloom of Gallantaria's regency must be returned to court.

Winter was coming and the kingdom must eat. The Netherworld sorcerers had cursed the coast with a ferocious demon fish, which tore apart fishing vessels and could eat a man whole. Since that day no fisherman would dare put to sea. Should he sail to the fishing ports to seek out the monster? But then the grain harvest had been poor and, unless the Eedetide could be tamed, the cropland would again be flooded, ruining the next autumn's harvest. Perhaps he ought to ride downstream to check the dam's progress. Or perhaps grain could be bought from neighbouring Ruddlestone. But the war effort had severely depleted his treasury. Could he raise taxes? Not a good idea, as this would mean starvation for many of the peasants. But gold reserves were low and .... *gold reserves?*

His anger rose at the thought of that unpunished scavenger beast lurking in the Cragrocks. *The Brimstone Dragon*, plundering hard-earned wealth from the Whitewater Valley. But none would venture to the Cragrock foothills to match the creature, none of sound mind at least—except perhaps the mighty Hornhelm, champion of Forrin. But Tantalon was forgetting. Hornhelm was no more. His bravery at the Battle of Skynn had won Gallantaria the day but cost the man of bronze his life. A posthumous knighthood must be awarded to honour him and his widow. Hornhelm had been a fearless warrior, bowing neither to beast nor magic-user. How Tantalon wished he was still at court.

The sorcerer's thoughts turned to his other nobles. There was little hope for Sir Duke the Merciful, whose good nature had led him into a simple trap. Sent east to defend the Witchtooth Line, his own troops had borne witness as he turned to stone before the cunning Medusa posing as a beggar woman. As he stepped up to drop a coin into her cup, her shroud fell back to reveal that hideous serpent-haired head.

And bold Sir Dunstable, en route up the Border River, captured by river pirates and held captive at Stinn Castle. Most certainly a rescue expedition must be despatched straightaway to free the knight. Then there was Tag.

Tantalon's teeth ground tightly at the thought. Yes, 'King' Tag must be dragged from his rathole, wherever he was. Even two years of war had not wiped the memory of Tag's treachery at Narrow Pass from Tantalon's mind. The traitor must be brought to justice. Fagorn, the blind seer, or perhaps the Four Princes may know of Tag's whereabouts; they were all from the north kingdom. But no. The Ham Princes were being held by the night priests. Another expedition must be organized.

Would this curse of evil ever be wiped from the land? That verminpit at Weirtown must be first for the scourge. Tantalon sighed. So many things to do, so many things to do ...

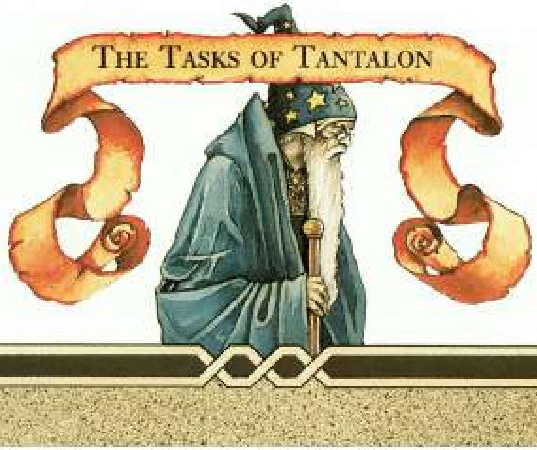
These thoughts and more tormented the wizard as he rested after the signing ceremony. Eventually, Tantalon raised himself from his throne. He had decided what to do.

Three days later, horsemen were despatched to the four corners of the kingdom announcing a challenge. Adventurers and fortune-hunters from far and wide began to arrive at the castle gates of Royal Lendle.

Tantalon had decided that the court needed new blood, new ideas, new faces—a new breath of life. To search out the wisest, most intelligent and courageous minds in the kingdom he had designed a grand adventure quest which would test the abilities of all those who entered to their limits. No one, he thought, would be capable of fulfilling all these labours. But at the back of his mind there was a spark of hope....

As the many hundreds of contestants made their ways to take up the challenge at Royal Lendle, YOU arrived at the wizard's court. Gaining audience with Tantalon himself, you receive your instructions on a scroll of parchment. The scroll describes twelve challenging tasks, each a trial of wisdom and ingenuity and each with one common theme: *the solution to each task is a number!* The winning contestant must add up the twelve numbers (one for each task) and return to court with the correct total – this final number can only be discovered if all twelve tasks have been successfully completed. With this final answer the contestant may claim the reward of Tantalon.

Can you succeed in Gallantaria's greatest contest? Have you the valour, the wisdom and the determination to succeed in an adventure quest which became known as .....



Release Sir Dunstable of Aiken
Four moons ago as captive taken

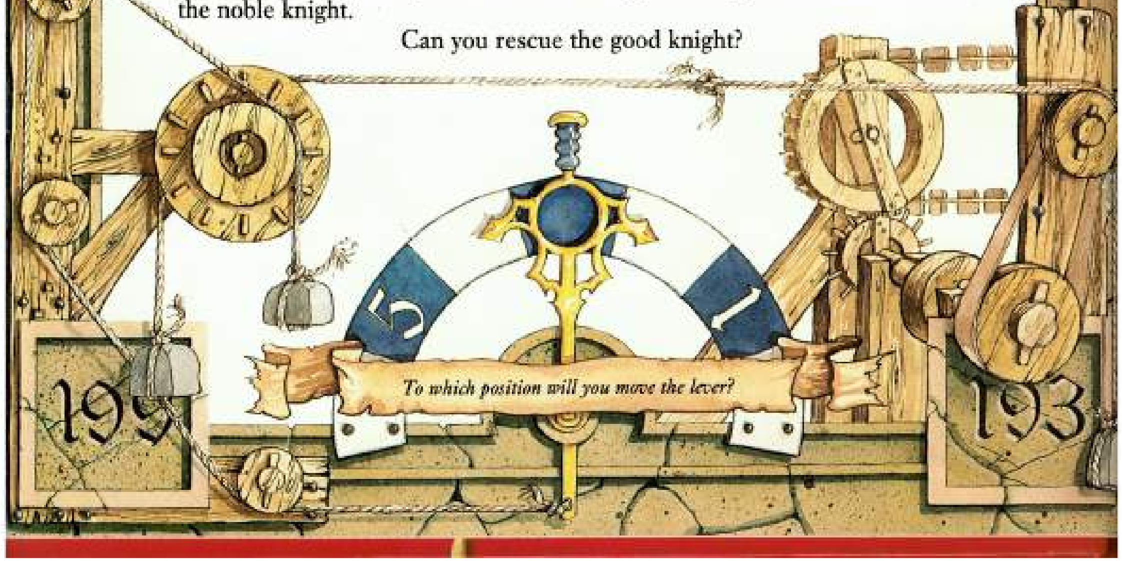
THE port at Eedefork bustled with activity as merchants, fishermen and seafarers went about their business. You quickly located a vessel which would take you up the Border River. It was a cargo ship—Captain Schankerman at the helm.

'Sir Dunstable, eh?' said Schankerman as you explained the purpose of your trip. 'Yes, I knew the man. And a fine gentleman he was. He and Sir Clance of Cygnet were set upon by river pirates as they sailed up the Border. Old Dunstable was given up as dead, but a fat merchant from Thax told me he'd been captured and slung into the dungeons at Stinn Castle.'

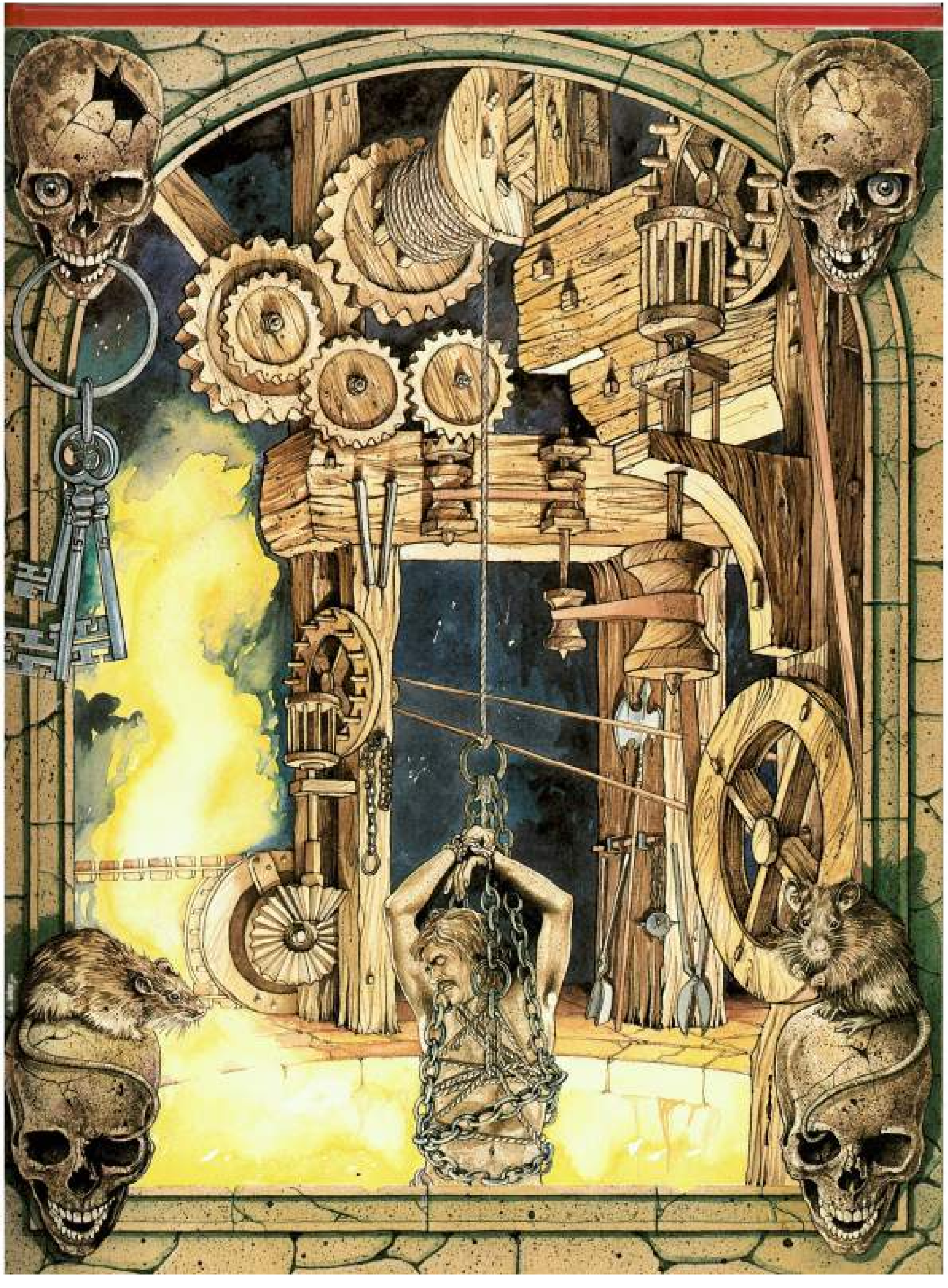
Eventually the fort at Stinn came into view. Schankerman pointed it out. His voice dropped to a whisper, 'See that tall oak just in front of the castle? Just by its trunk you'll find an opening which leads right into the dungeons. Take care. *And Good Luck to you.*'

He did not lie. A trap door hidden in the grass by the tall tree opened the way to the bowels of the castle. You followed the narrow passage to its end. You now stand in a dimly-lit corridor in the Stinn dungeon. Cautiously searching the dungeon, you open a door into a torture room from which a low moaning is coming. You stifle a gasp as you recognize the emaciated figure of Sir Dunstable! He is suspended over a flaming pit by a rope connected to a lever by a complex series of pulleys. You step up to the lever and consider the mechanisms. You will raise him from the pit if you move the lever in the correct direction, but if you choose the wrong position, you will seal the fate of the noble knight.

Can you rescue the good knight?



To which position will you move the lever?



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The Demon Fish must terrorize No more the shores of Fickling Rise

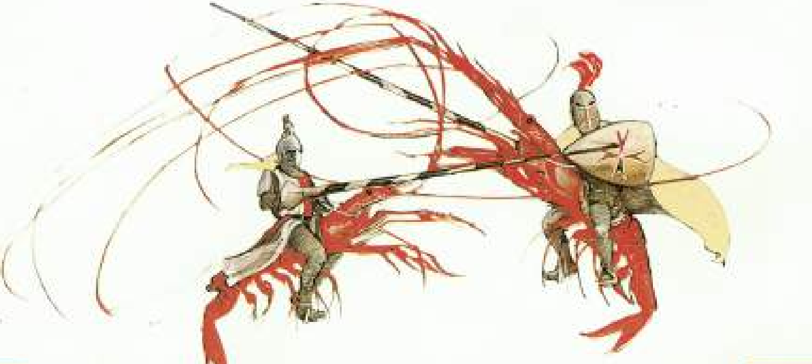
THE second stage of your quest takes you to Fickling, a fortified town at the mouth of the Eede. A tall castle, high on the Rise, overlooks the sea. Just down from the castle on the sea shore is a small fishing village where a spirit of gloom hangs in the air. You eat that night at an inn, sitting at a table with the local fishermen. Their eyes widen as you explain your arrival.

Their laughter mocks you. A fisherman shouts out: 'And they tell us that Tantalon is a wise man! *Ha!* First of all he sends that young whippersnapper Sir Beade for supervision of the verminpit, then he sends us *you* to rid us of the Demon Fish. Why, the fellow is surely age-crazed!'

'Be not a fool, stranger,' adds a gruff-voiced old man puffing on a long clay pipe. 'No fisherman alive can take that monster. And none of sound mind will be foolhardy enough to try!'

Later, as you lie in your bed, you consider how best to tackle the great beast. First of all you must find out what you can about the creature—where it swims and what it eats. You spend the next morning learning of the habits of the sea creatures. Then, before you can begin to fish for the Demon Fish, you must buy your bait.

What bait will you buy to help you fish for the Demon Fish? Minnows will cost you three Copper Pieces; worms will cost two Copper Pieces. Flies or meat will be more expensive, at six and seven Copper Pieces respectively.



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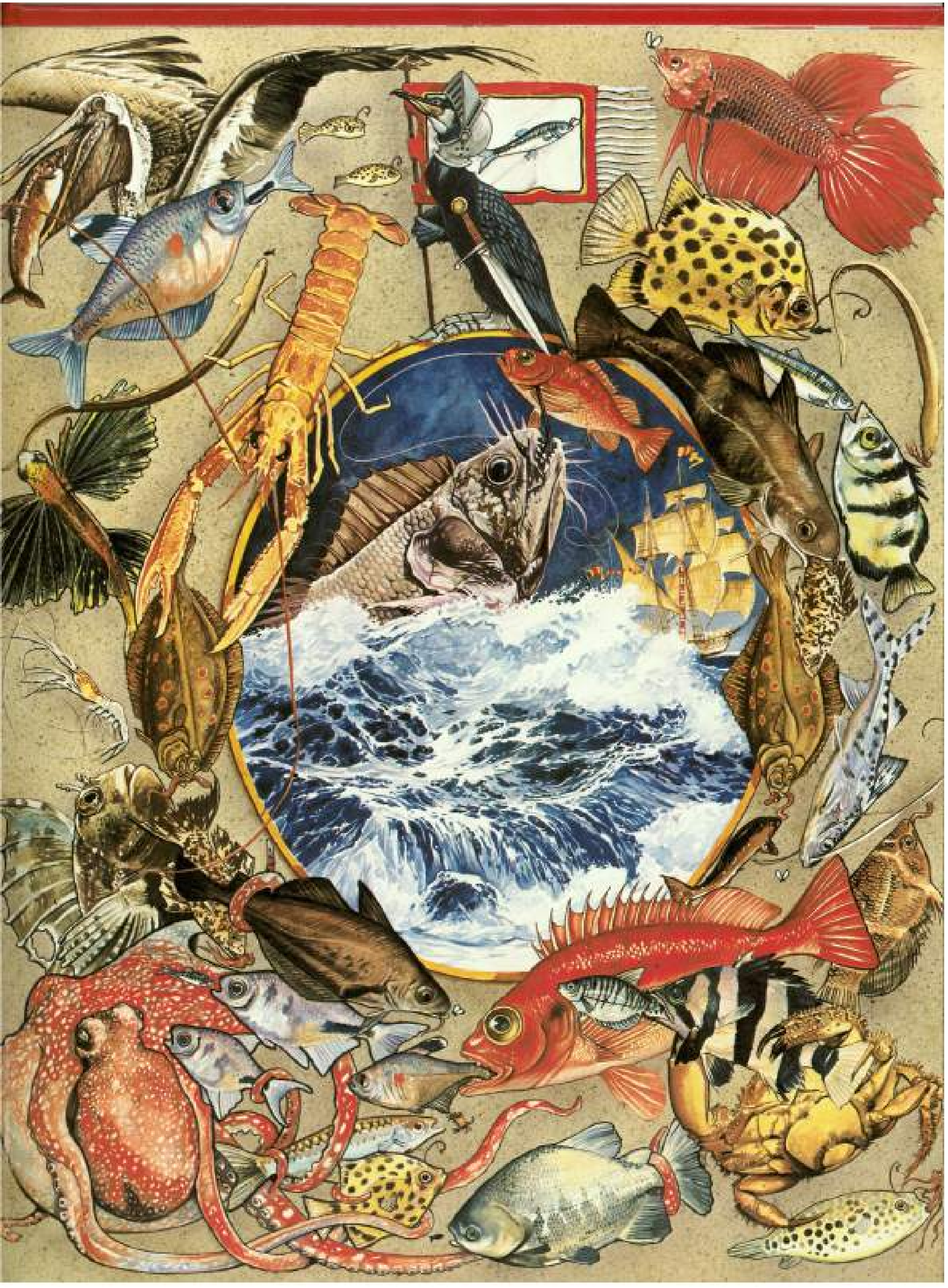
Choose your bait carefully. How many Copper Pieces will you spend?

295



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The Hag-Witch of Weirtown runs free
Arrest this foe—Bring her to me

THAT night, the festivities at Fickling are in your honour. The villagers are anxious to show their gratitude. The apothecary presents you with a special gift. He hands you a small vial of liquid.

'This potion,' he announces, 'is my greatest achievement. Drink this and, for a short while, you may walk unseen. I know you must face one of the fire-breathers. With this you will be safe.'

The next morning, your journey continues, following the River Weir to Weirtown, verminpit of the kingdom. Unsavoury creatures from throughout Gallantaria have been drawn to Weirtown and its dark ways.

The Hag-Witch is a sorceress of great skill who is a constant nuisance to Gallantaria's white magicians. You plan to surprise and subdue her before she can use her powers. Creeping up to her dwelling, you peep through the window. She is asleep in a chair! You heave at the door and charge into the room. In an instant, the sleeping figure has disappeared! A chuckle behind makes you spin round . . .

The Hag-Witch, cackling slyly, is hobbling down the steps from the door into the street. You have been tricked! But this old, hobbling woman is no match for your speed. You spring forwards. But just as quickly you stop dead in your tracks, unable to believe your eyes.

Two identical witches are running on ahead. Seconds later *another* double has appeared and all three turn the corner into the market square! You compose yourself and follow. But as you enter the market square, your hope dies. The cunning hag has continued the illusion and now a number of likenesses have spread around the market. How will you catch her now?

Your only chance is to pursue and capture
each image of the Hag-Witch.

How many Hag-Witches can you see?

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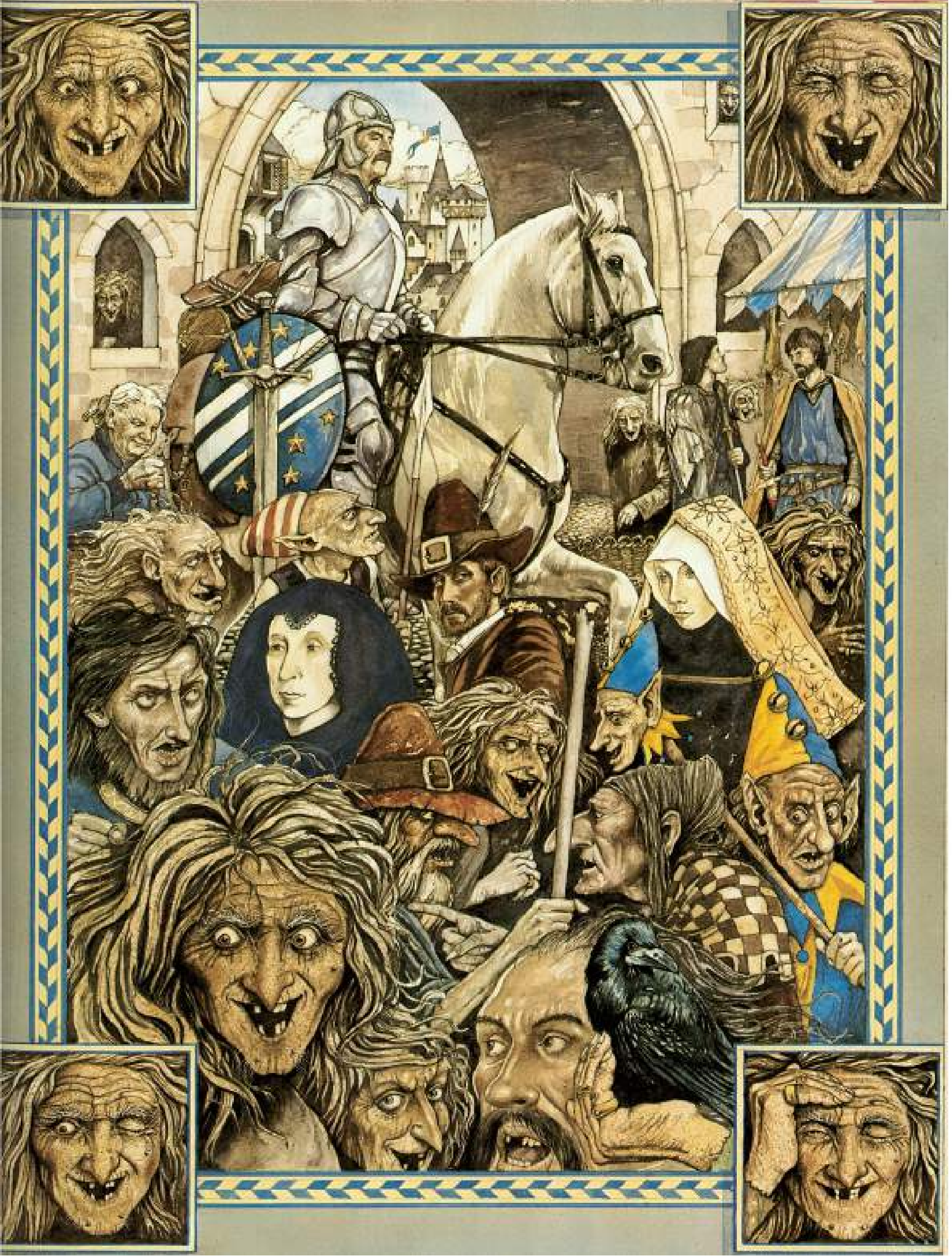


Four sages tried—none can succeed
In holding back the River Eede

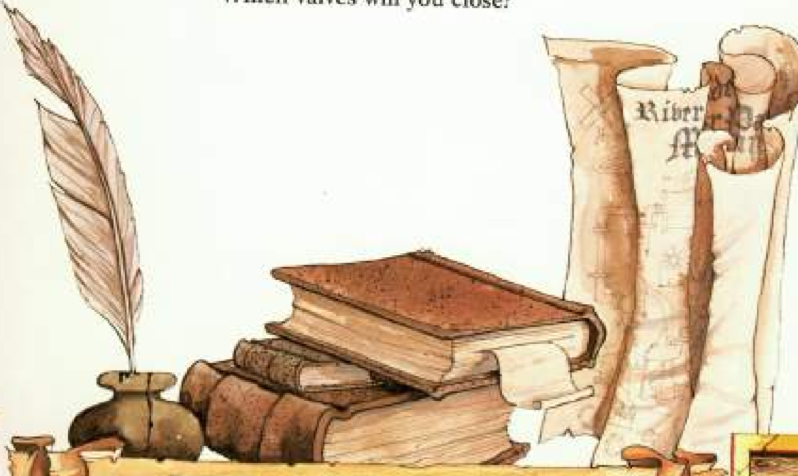
THE various attempts to dam the Eede have all been unsuccessful. The force of the great spring floods has destroyed every barrier yet constructed. Some of the kingdom's greatest minds in engineering, agriculture and even wizardry have been set to work on preventing the annual floods which continually ruined otherwise fertile cropland. All have failed to stem the flow of the great river.

When you arrive at the site of the newly-constructed dam, a heated argument is taking place between a group of elderly scholars. You join them to see whether you can be of help.

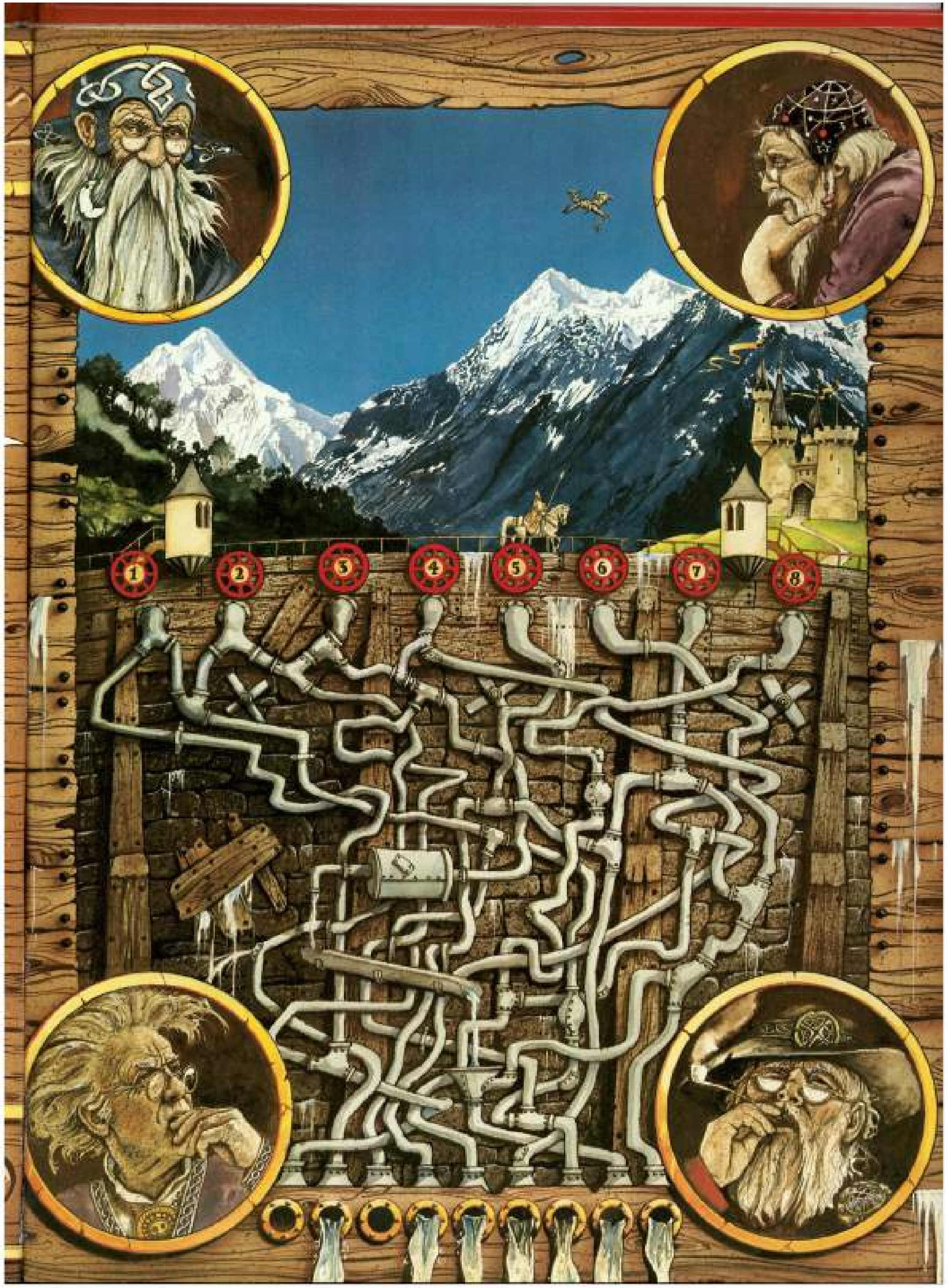
The theory is sound. Rather than cutting off entirely the river's flow, their dam is designed to *control* it. Water flows from the river into a complex series of pipes through eight tap valves. Thus more, or less, water will flow according to how the taps are set. But, alas, the scholars have lost their master plan! Without dismantling the dam they cannot know how their taps are set and thus they may not control the river's flow.

Studying the present flow of the water, you are able to deduce that only three of the valves must be turned off to stop the flow entirely.

Which valves will you close?



What is the sum of the numbers on the open valves?



The Brimstone Dragon foe of old
Bring home to court its hoard of gold

THE southern reaches of the Cragrock Peak foothills are avoided by all but the most foolhardy of Gallantaria. Great beasts—behemoths of a bygone age—have migrated to the Cragrocks over the centuries and now a precarious territorial balance exists.

The town of Klisdon is the last outpost of civilization before the Dark Cliffs. At the *Pig and Goblet* you meet Chauncey, a sprightly dwarf, fond of his ale. The men of Klisdon are well known for their miserliness and Chauncey is no exception; the drinking is all at your expense.

But his stories and his knowledge of the area are well worth a few mugs of ale. He has met many of the kingdom's nobles: Sir Tag of Casper and his ailing wife Davina; Sir Duke and his identical twin brother Sir Beade; even the noble Sir Dunstable and his half-cousin Sir Clance. Chauncey has met them all. He is happy to describe the route northwards.

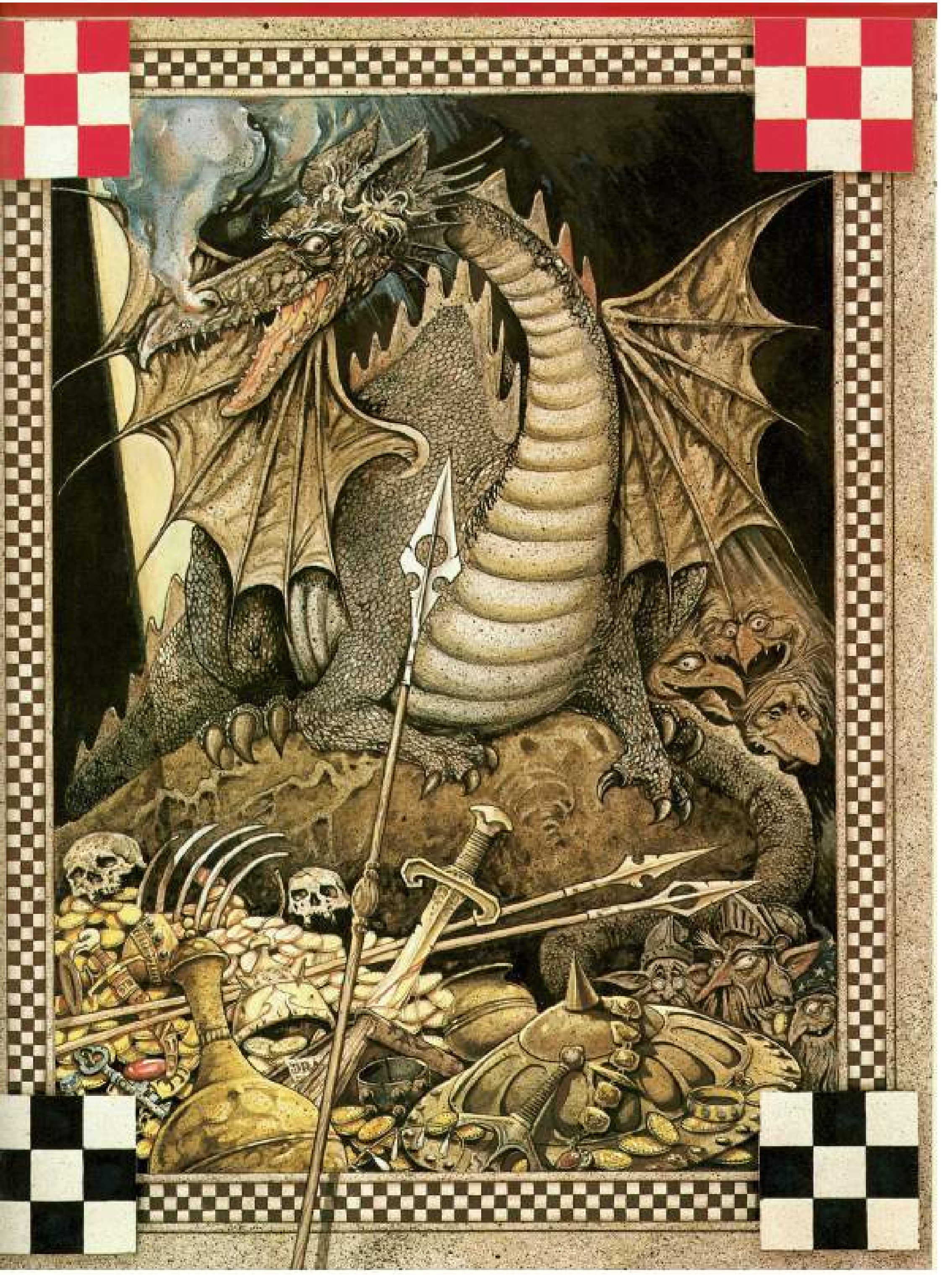
Following his directions the next day, you reach the lair of the Brimstone Dragon in late afternoon. A gaping cave entrance is set in the towering Cragrock hillside. The cave is shallow, but its proportions are enormous. A deep snorting from inside confirms your suspicions. The beast is at home!

A first sighting of the creature makes your heart leap. Atop a rich pile of gold, silver, gems and jewels, the Dragon sits on its hoard. But you have with you the vial presented by the apothecary of Fickling. You swallow the potion.

Cautiously, you step forwards into the Dragon's cave.
The potion works! The beast cannot see you!
Whilst you remain invisible, you may
now collect its treasure.

123
345
567
789

How many Gold Pieces will you find in the Brimstone Dragon's hoard?



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Waylaid and held by sorcery
The Princes of the Ham set free

At dawn the next day you set off north-eastwards towards the Greenbeck River. The young Princes are held beneath a ruined temple on its banks by the Moon-Worshippers of Phlanx. At night their captives are tormented; during the day they are guarded by Giant Horntoads.

By mid-afternoon you reach the temple. The entrance is by a tree in which a swarm of bees buzzes around its nest. You climb down a rubbled stairway to explore the corridors below. And in a narrow passageway you reach your goal.

The four princes are indeed held by sorcery. They have been transformed into frogs! They are trapped at the far end of a narrow dead end passageway, guarded by four Horntoads, who are watching them patiently. A barred gate prevents you from entering the passage, but if the frogs and toads were to exchange places, the Princes could easily hop through the bars to safety.

Knowing a little of Horntoads and their voracious appetite for insects, you nip smartly back up the stairs and fetch the bees' nest from the tree outside. With a heave, you fling it to the far end of the passageway behind the frogs. The frantic buzzing of the bees seems to excite the Horntoads.

Will your plan work? You shout instructions to the Frog-Princes, telling them how to move. The Horntoads will always move towards the bees. If they follow your plan correctly, the Princes may exchange positions with the Horntoads and from there they may hop through the bars to safety. Remember that there may never be two creatures on the same flagstone; each creature may only hop in the direction it is facing; and that a hop may only be either forwards onto an empty flagstone in front of it or over an opponent onto an empty flagstone. The Princes, being much quicker than the Horntoads, will always be able to control the movement; when they wish to occupy a flagstone they will hop in quickly. If they want a Horntoad to hop onto it they will simply wait. They start by waiting. Lured by the bees, the leading Horntoad hops first onto the empty flagstone between the two sets of creatures.

How many hops (in total) will the Princes have to make in order to exactly exchange positions with the Horntoads?

196

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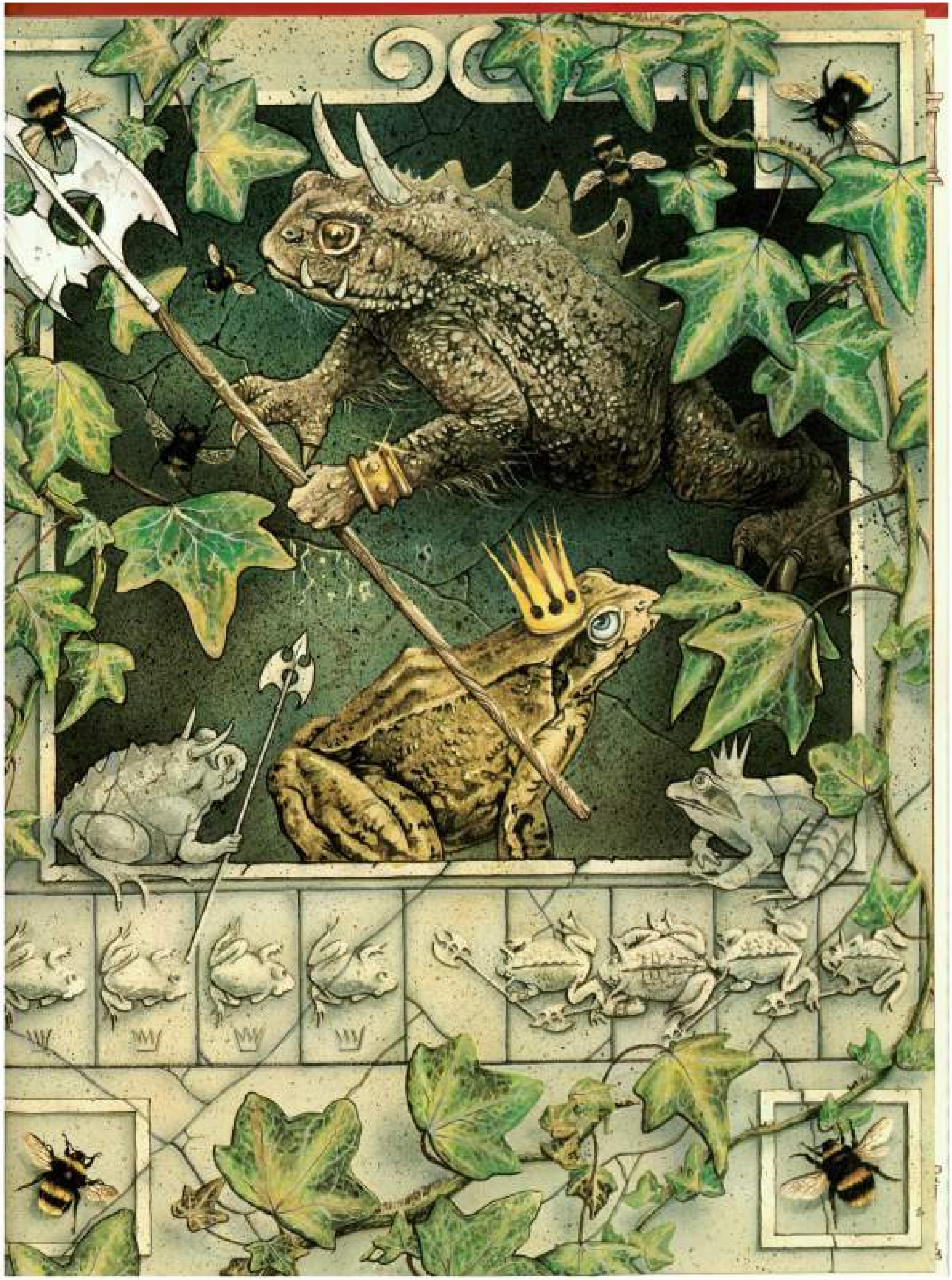


167

230

The regent's jewel must no more
Be wielded by the Minotaur

As you climb the stairs into the daylight above, with the four small frogs cradled in your hands, a transformation takes place. The sun's rays fall upon the creatures and they slowly change shape to become once more four fine young men. The Princes are more than grateful for their rescue and wish to help you in return.

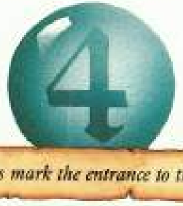
'My brothers and I do not envy you this task,' warns Prince Hanna. 'Indeed we know of the man-bull. The creature dwells in an underground maze by the widest point of the Eede.'

The youngest Prince whispers to Hanna, who nods in agreement. 'My little brother suggests you seek out Fagorn, the seer. Though his eyes see no more, his mind has far greater powers of sight. Follow the Eede towards its mouth and you will find Fagorn's home. Mention the name of Hanna, Prince of Chessog. Perhaps Fagorn may aid you.' You thank the Princes and set off.

Eventually you find the old man's hovel. At the mention of Prince Hanna's name, he bids you welcome and invites you in for the night. The blind man listens attentively as you relate your exploits. 'You are indeed a courageous adventurer!' laughs Fagorn. 'But you will need all your courage and more to face the man-bull and recover the regency jewel. Four paths lead into his maze. But only one path is unguarded. The others are all lain with deadly traps. If you choose the correct path you will be able to surprise the creature and defeat him. I know not which is the safe route but can tell you this. The Orb of Shantos, fashioned in blue crystal, knows the secret of the Minotaur's passages. Its advice will lead you safely to the creature.'

As you leave the next morning, Fagorn hands you a parchment scroll. 'Take this with you,' he says, 'and study it. For it is a map of the Minotaur's labyrinth. Study it well. Also, I know your journey will take you to Casper. The object of your search has been stolen by Morphus. Seek this man out.'

Some time later you reach the cave leading to the man-bull's domain. You pause to study your map. Which of the four entrances will you choose?



How many stars mark the entrance to the safe route?

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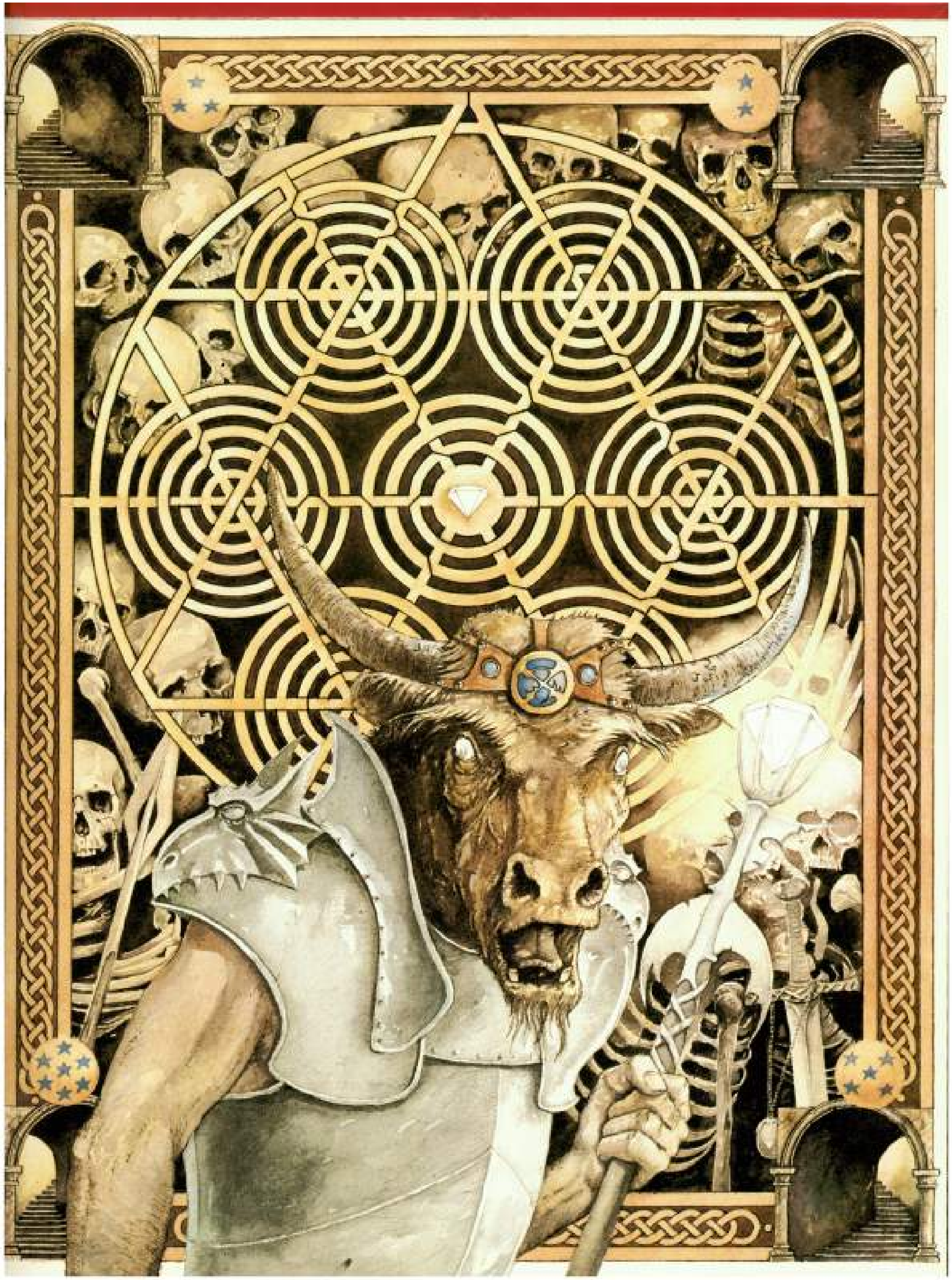


Seek out the Ting Ring but be wise
It has the power to disguise

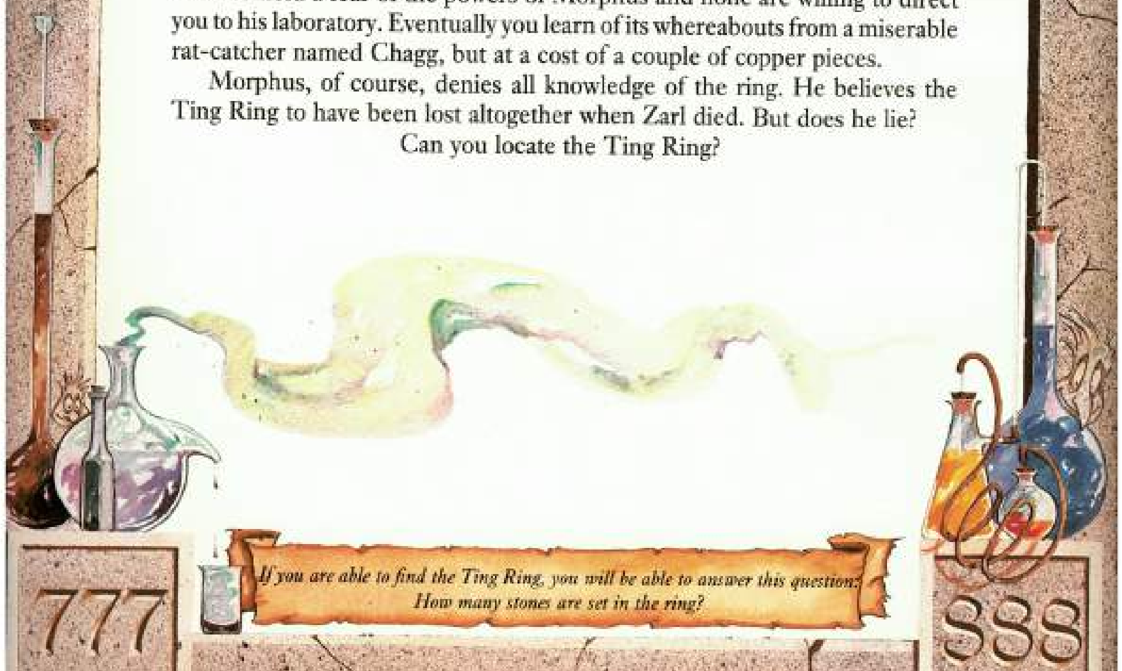
YOU emerge from the labyrinth and set off immediately for Casper, for your next task is to find the Ting Ring.

The Ting Ring was forged by the Netherworld Sorcerers, an ancient race living high in the Cragrocks. Their finest achievement, the Ting Ring, was stolen many years ago by Zarl, a necromancer from Casper. Such power is bestowed upon its owner that Gallantaria will be safe only if the Ring is presented to the custody of the court at Lendle. On Zarl's death, the ring never reappeared. But this was hardly surprising in view of one of its special powers. For the Ting Ring had the chameleon-like power to blend in with its surroundings, making it nigh on impossible to locate.

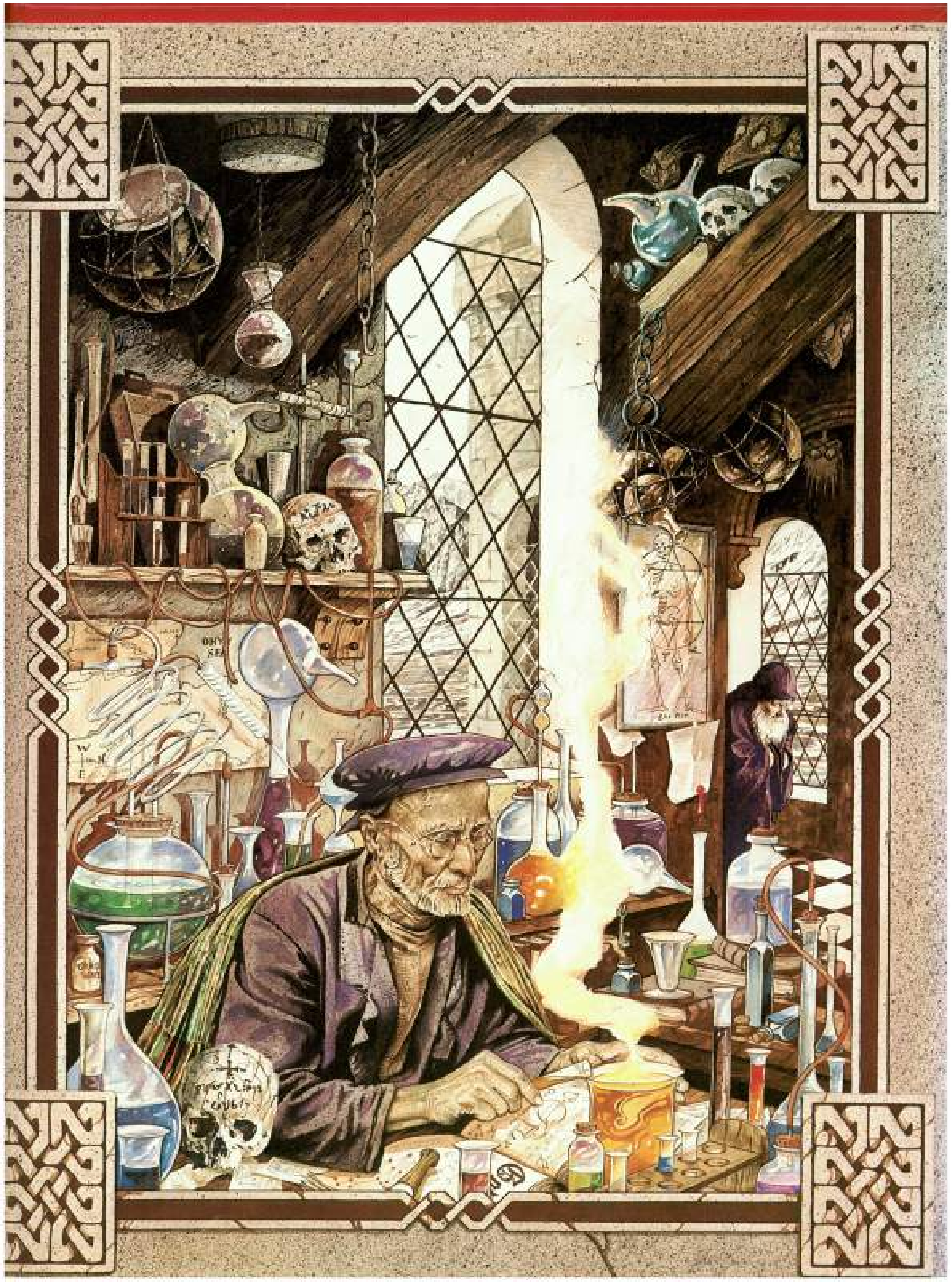
Following Fagorn's advice, you begin your search with the laboratories of Morphus the alchemist, to whom all of Zarl's possessions were bequeathed on his death. But finding the ageing alchemist is no easy task. The folk of Casper seem to hold a fear of the powers of Morphus and none are willing to direct you to his laboratory. Eventually you learn of its whereabouts from a miserable rat-catcher named Chagg, but at a cost of a couple of copper pieces.

Morphus, of course, denies all knowledge of the ring. He believes the Ting Ring to have been lost altogether when Zarl died. But does he lie?

Can you locate the Ting Ring?



If you are able to find the Ting Ring, you will be able to answer this question:
How many stones are set in the ring?



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215

In exile living underground
King Tag of Casper must be found

Ever since the episode at Narrow Pass, Tag had earned the name of 'The Betrayer'. Having made a somewhat unholy alliance with the regent of Brice, Tag had laid plans for the murder of his own King Constain. During the second year of the war he had arranged the infamous ambush in Narrow Pass. On that fateful day Tag himself was escorting the King, riding with his queen back towards Forrin from the North Kingdom. When they reached Narrow Pass, a party of rebellious Northlanders isolated the royal party and all were slain. It was Tag himself who dealt the death blow to Constain.

A self-proclaimed king, his traitorous act was exposed, forcing him to flee to the countryside. Rumour has it that he is now hiding between Casper and the Greenbeck.

You set off on Tag's trail. Travelling across from Casper towards Chessog you can only pick up meagre clues to his whereabouts.

On fleeing from Casper, King Tag met the Lady Davina, his Queen, at a secret rendezvous point due north in the shadow of Mount Cuspid. Together they rode southwards through the night to Eacham Abbey to meet their friend and spiritual guide, the Bishop of Eacham. A faithful ally, the Bishop escorted them three days later to Greycloud Manor, home of Sir Neibling, Knight of Eacham. But even this friend was forced to turn them out when, two nights later, a band of loyalist vigilantes were scouted to the north.

But here your trail has ended. Where is King Tag likely to be now? The traitor's hiding place is shown on the map.

If you can deduce where King Tag is hiding, read off the north-south and east-west co-ordinates of his refuge and add them together.

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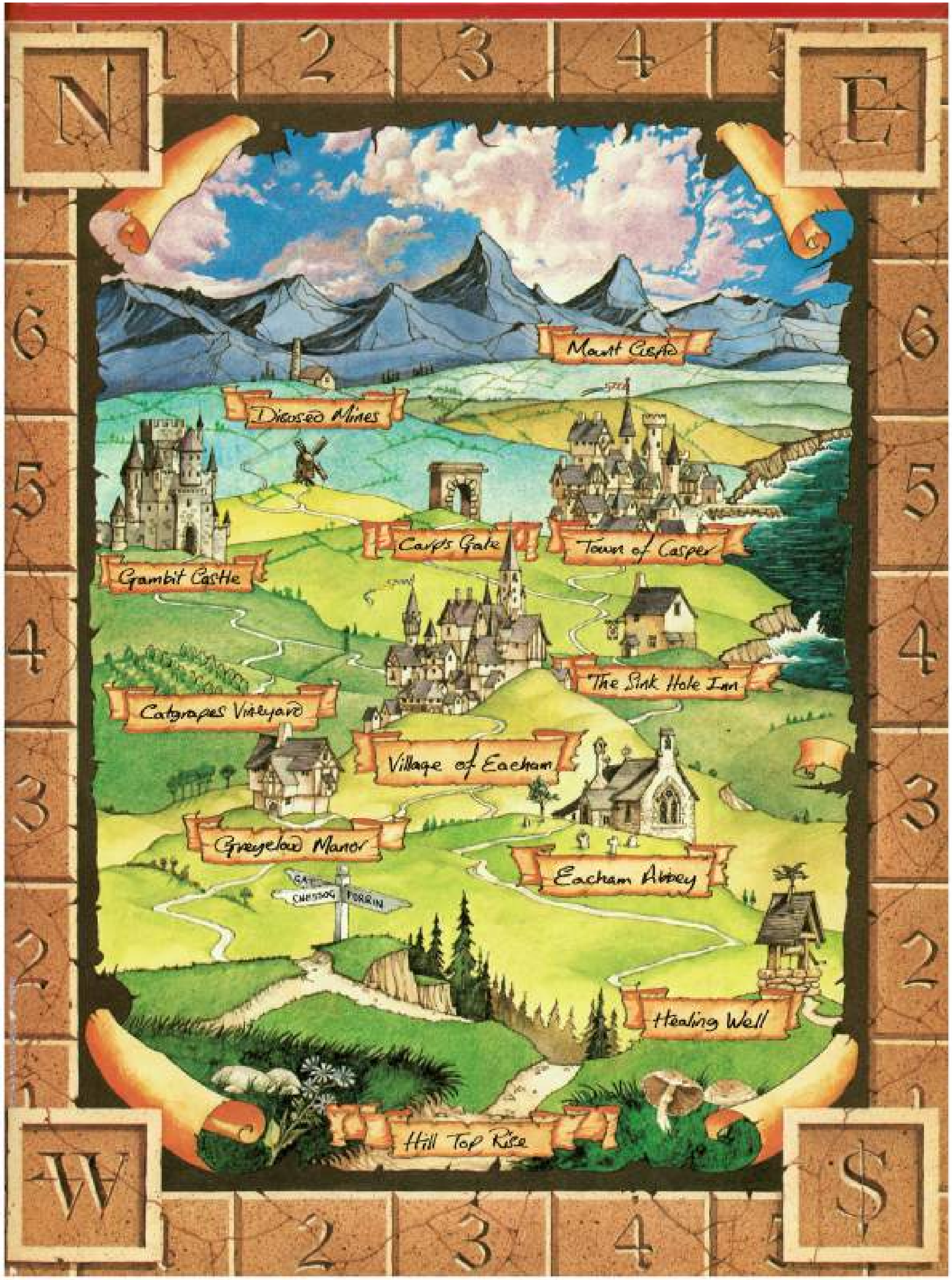
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Gambit Castle
Carp's Gate
Town of Casper
The Sink Hole Inn
Catgrapes Vineyard
Village of Eacham
Greyelaw Manor
GA
CHESSOG
FORRIN
Eacham Abbey
Healing Well
Hill Top Rise
W
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178

191

The Golden Cross from Hornhelm's Crown
Must be returned to Forrin Town

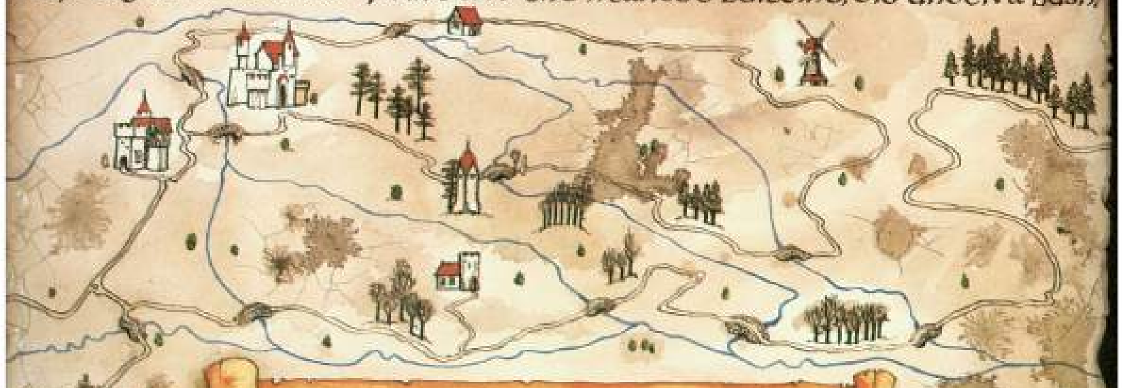
YOUR next task takes you south-westwards again to Forrin Town for another hunt, this time for the treasure of Hornhelm. A gallant commander in the war, Hornhelm has already become a legend with the people of Forrin. His acts of courage will be remembered with pride through the ages. But, alas, noble Hornhelm was struck down in battle.

Fearing an invasion, Hornhelm had taken steps to guard his personal riches, plundered from the enemy. His treasure, and the fabled Golden Cross, had been secretly buried for safekeeping. But his death was untimely. He alone knew of the treasure's whereabouts.

You return to Forrin and gain audience with Serendra, Hornhelm's lady. Taking you into her trust, she gives you the only clue to Hornhelm's secret—a scroll which bears a map and a message.

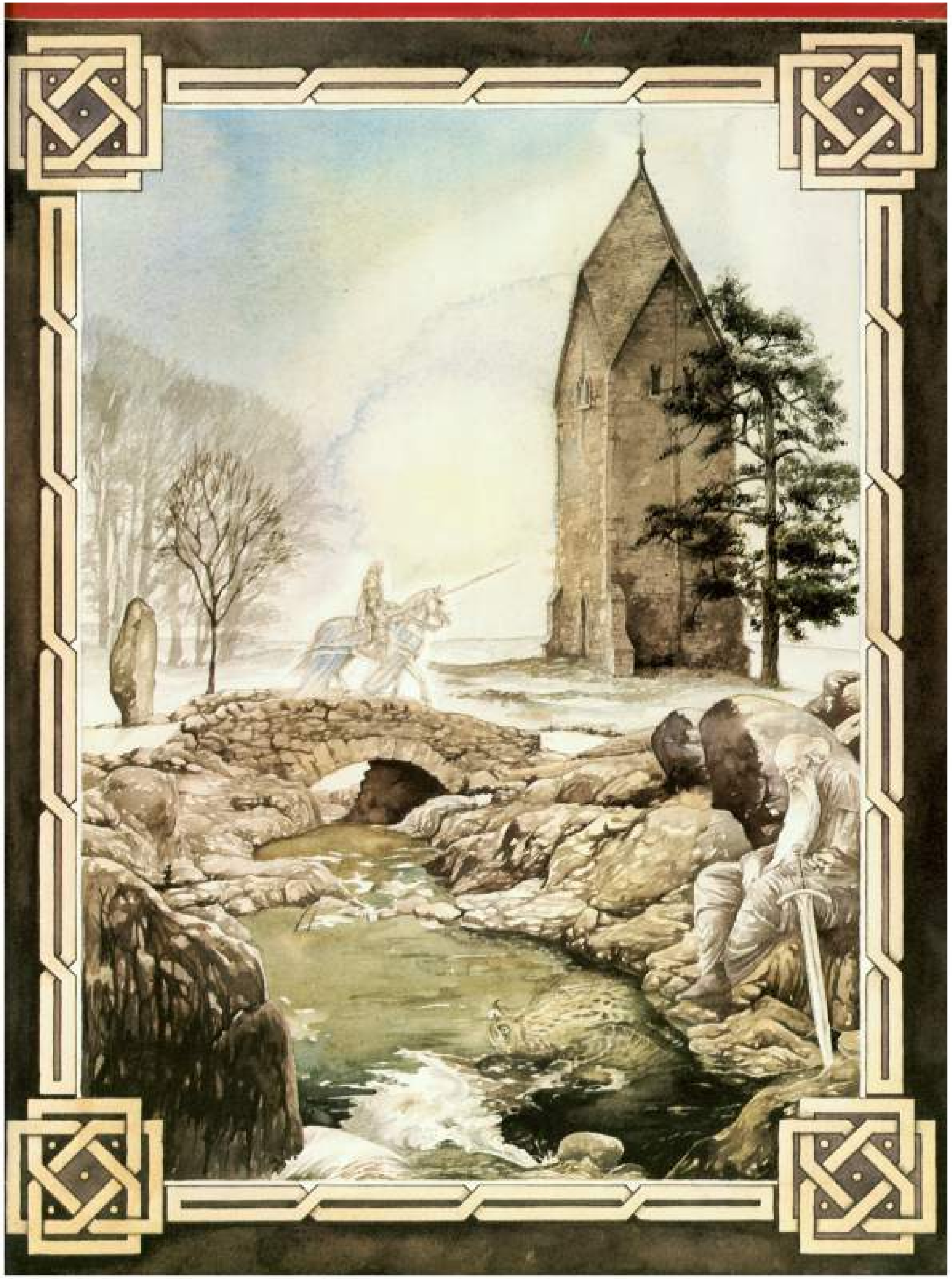
At sunrise the next morning you arrive on Windswept Moor. Can you locate Hornhelm's treasure?

FROM THE TALLEST TREE ON WINDSWEPT MOOR, WALK TOWARDS
THE NEAREST PATH. FOLLOW IT TO THE RIGHT UNTIL YOU REACH A BRIDGE
WALK UPSTREAM UNTIL TWO BUILDINGS ARE DIRECTLY IN LINE. THEN
TURN EASTWARDS AND CONTINUE UNTIL YOU REACH A PATH.
HALFWAY BETWEEN THIS POINT AND THE NEAREST BUILDING, DIG UNDER A BUSH,



If you can locate the treasure, you will be able to answer this question:
How many trees grow next to the tallest tree on Windswept Moor?

THE SPIRIT OF HORNHELM
WILL HAUNT FOREVER THOSE WHO DIG FOR SELFISH GAIN. WHATEVER
IS TO BE FOUND BELONGS RIGHTFULLY TO THE PEOPLE OF FORRIN



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348

Release Cassandra locked inside The prison tower at Cumbleside

THE people of Forrin are overjoyed as you return with Hornhelm's treasure. Such is the wisdom of Tantalon, you think to yourself. Forrin was ravaged in the war and lost its greatest hero. What better boost to the morale of the town than to have an adventurer—rather than a greedy treasure hunter—return Hornhelm's treasure to the people?

Serendra rushes towards you, tears in her eyes. You have returned with a fitting tribute to her husband's memory. You spend the night with the good people of Forrin and leave early next morning on your penultimate quest. And as a token of their appreciation, the people of Forrin present you with a fine silver mirror to aid you on your travels.

The long journey along the Eede is an ordeal. You cross over the great river on a ferryboat and set off towards the Cumble.

The Cumble River is a tributary of the Eede which winds to the east through Cumbleside, a small town built up by a ford on the river. But Cumbleside has been deserted for some years now. It was never a secure place, close on the border of Gallantaria and in the shadow of the Witchtooth Line. The creatures of the Witchtooth ventured out as far as Cumbleside and it was here that the Lady Cassandra, a gentlewoman of the court, was captured and imprisoned by Gremlins for their own amusement.

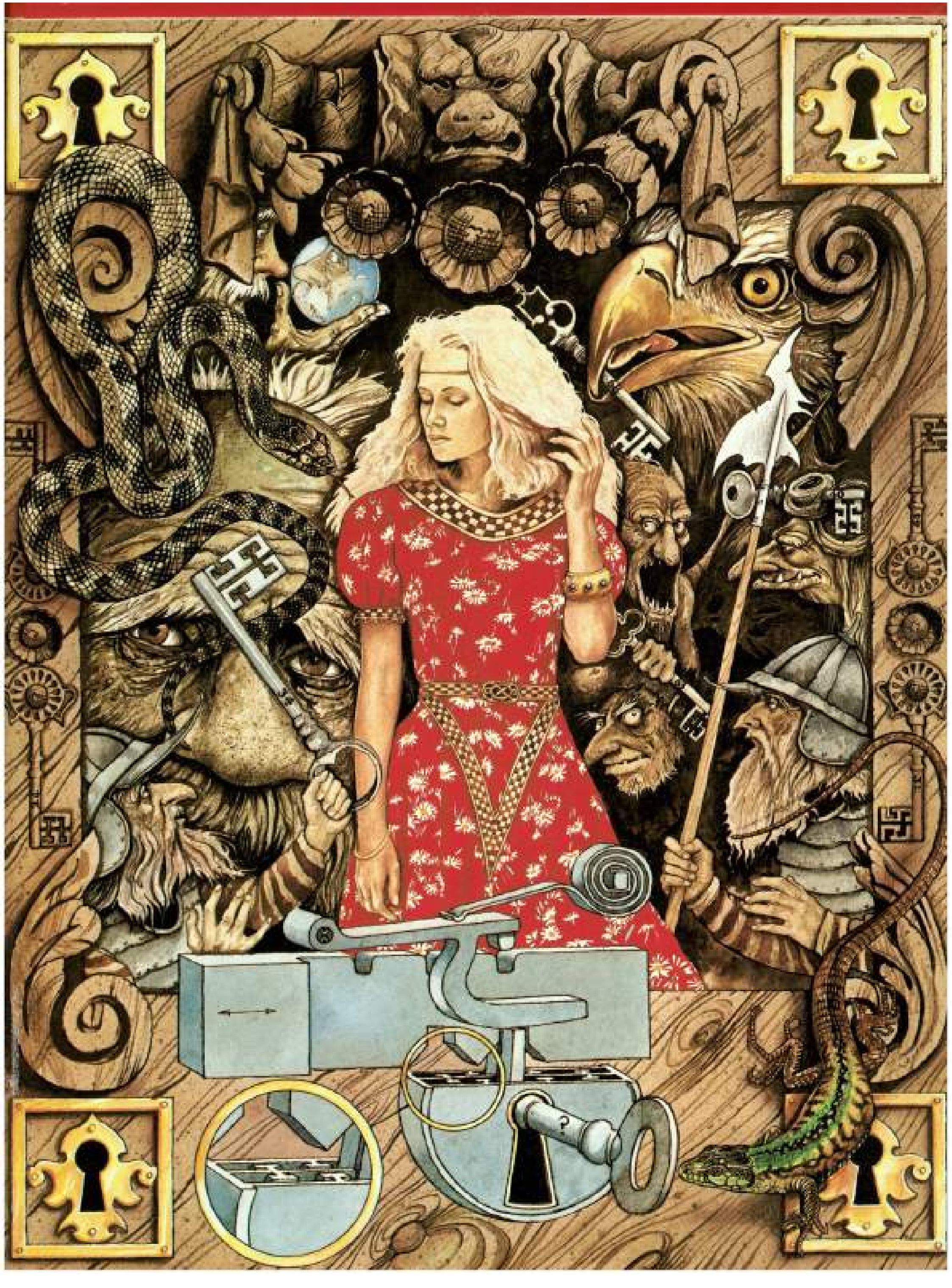
Cumbleside itself shows no signs of life. A short distance from the town, the prison tower looms upwards in the air. You approach and find the tower is unguarded. But as you discover, a guard is not necessary. The door is locked with a secure fastening.

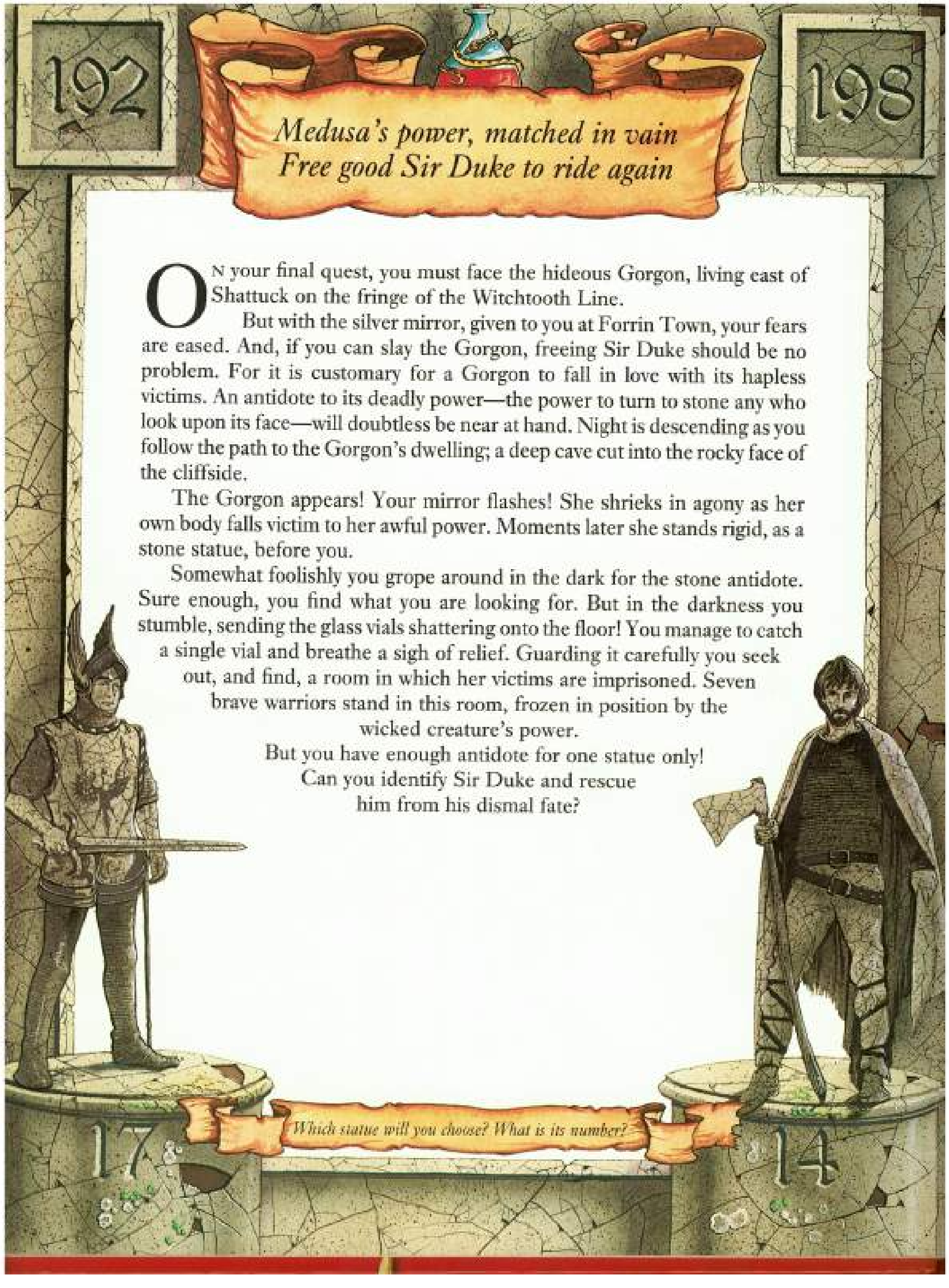
Do you have the key to unlock the door?

254

682

Identify the correct key by its number.





Medusa's power, matched in vain
Free good Sir Duke to ride again

On your final quest, you must face the hideous Gorgon, living east of Shattuck on the fringe of the Witchtooth Line.

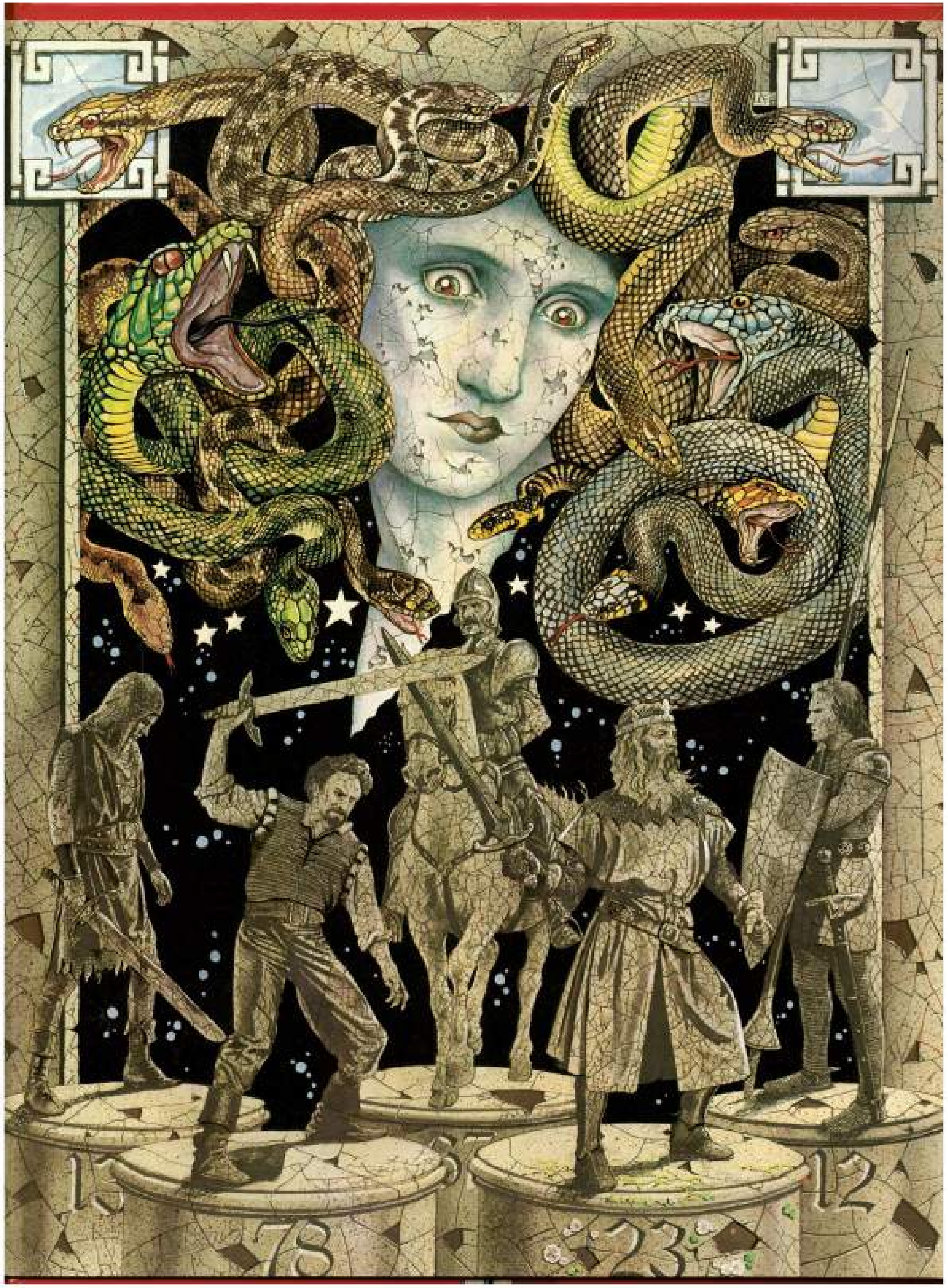
But with the silver mirror, given to you at Forrin Town, your fears are eased. And, if you can slay the Gorgon, freeing Sir Duke should be no problem. For it is customary for a Gorgon to fall in love with its hapless victims. An antidote to its deadly power—the power to turn to stone any who look upon its face—will doubtless be near at hand. Night is descending as you follow the path to the Gorgon's dwelling; a deep cave cut into the rocky face of the cliffside.

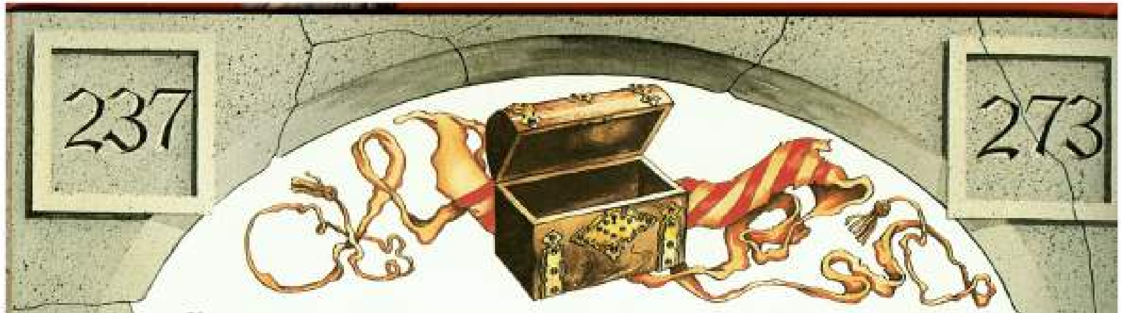
The Gorgon appears! Your mirror flashes! She shrieks in agony as her own body falls victim to her awful power. Moments later she stands rigid, as a stone statue, before you.

Somewhat foolishly you grope around in the dark for the stone antidote. Sure enough, you find what you are looking for. But in the darkness you stumble, sending the glass vials shattering onto the floor! You manage to catch a single vial and breathe a sigh of relief. Guarding it carefully you seek out, and find, a room in which her victims are imprisoned. Seven brave warriors stand in this room, frozen in position by the wicked creature's power.

But you have enough antidote for one statue only! Can you identify Sir Duke and rescue him from his dismal fate?

Which statue will you choose? What is its number?





You return to court triumphant, ready to announce your success proudly to your ruler. But a shock awaits you...

'Have you not heard?' asks the guard at the palace gate. 'Tantalon no longer rules. Our master passed away two nights ago!' A chill sweeps over you. *Tantalon dead?* Surely not. Sadly, you tell the guard of your intended business.

'The Tasks? *You have completed the Tasks?* Then wait here, my friend, please wait for a moment. I must announce your arrival!' Excitedly, the guard runs into the palace. Minutes later, a tall, grey-haired noble greets you.

'Welcome, friend. I am Sir Dirk, Minister of the Court. I believe you have only just heard the sad news. The court is in mourning still. But perhaps your own news may bring fresh hope to this place. Have you alone accomplished the impossible?' Together you walk inside whilst you recount your adventures. Sir Dirk's eyes widen as you tell him of your encounters. He leads you into an anteroom.

'Before Tantalon died,' he says, 'he entrusted me with a small casket. My instructions are to give this casket to whomsoever should return successfully from his quest. My friend, I give *you* this casket. I only pray that its contents will bring both you and Gallantaria itself the good fortune you both deserve.'

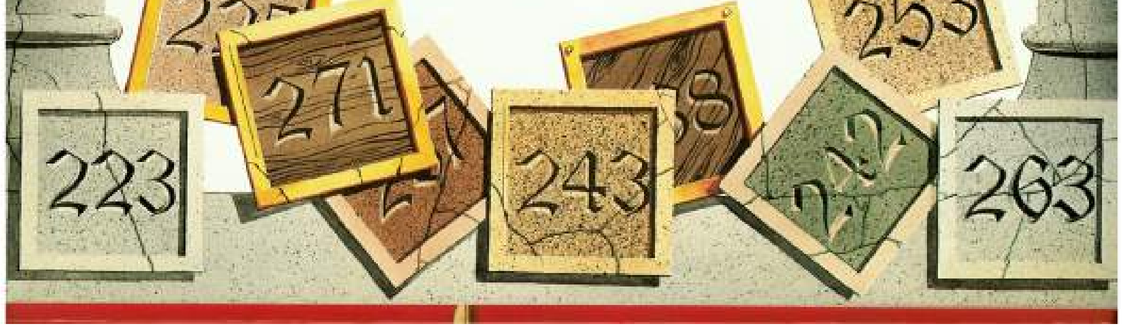
With these words, Sir Dirk leaves. You are alone in the room with Tantalon's casket. Nervously you open the lid. Inside is a scroll and a handful of small runestones. *What can this mean?* Slowly, you unroll the scroll.

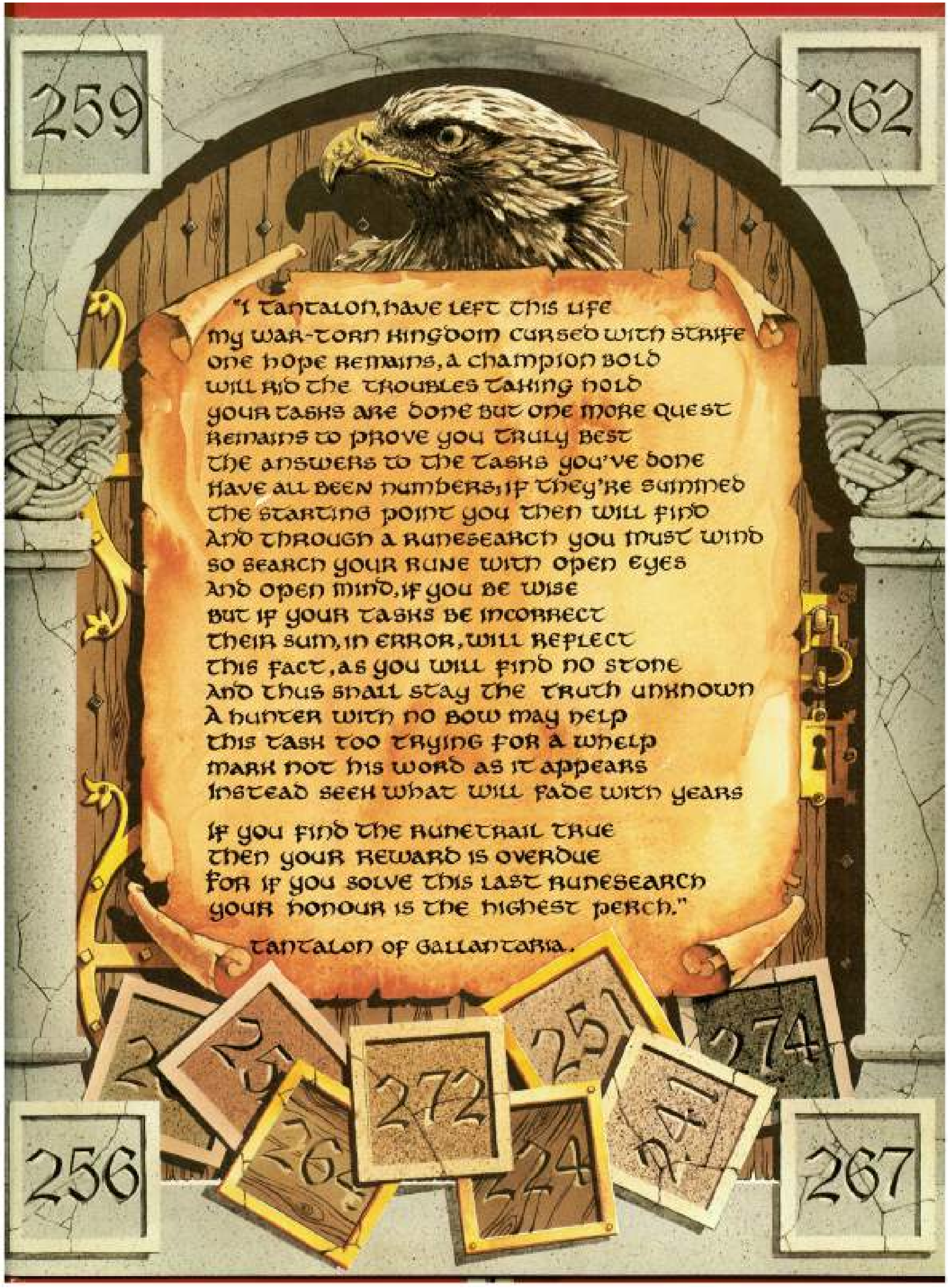
Twelve tasks have been completed. This the thirteenth and final task will prove whether or not you have completed your mission successfully.

Can you decipher Tantalon's last message? Are you truly worthy of the honour in store? Have you proven yourself to be Gallantari's finest champion?

Will history remember you as master of ...

THE TASKS OF TANTALON?

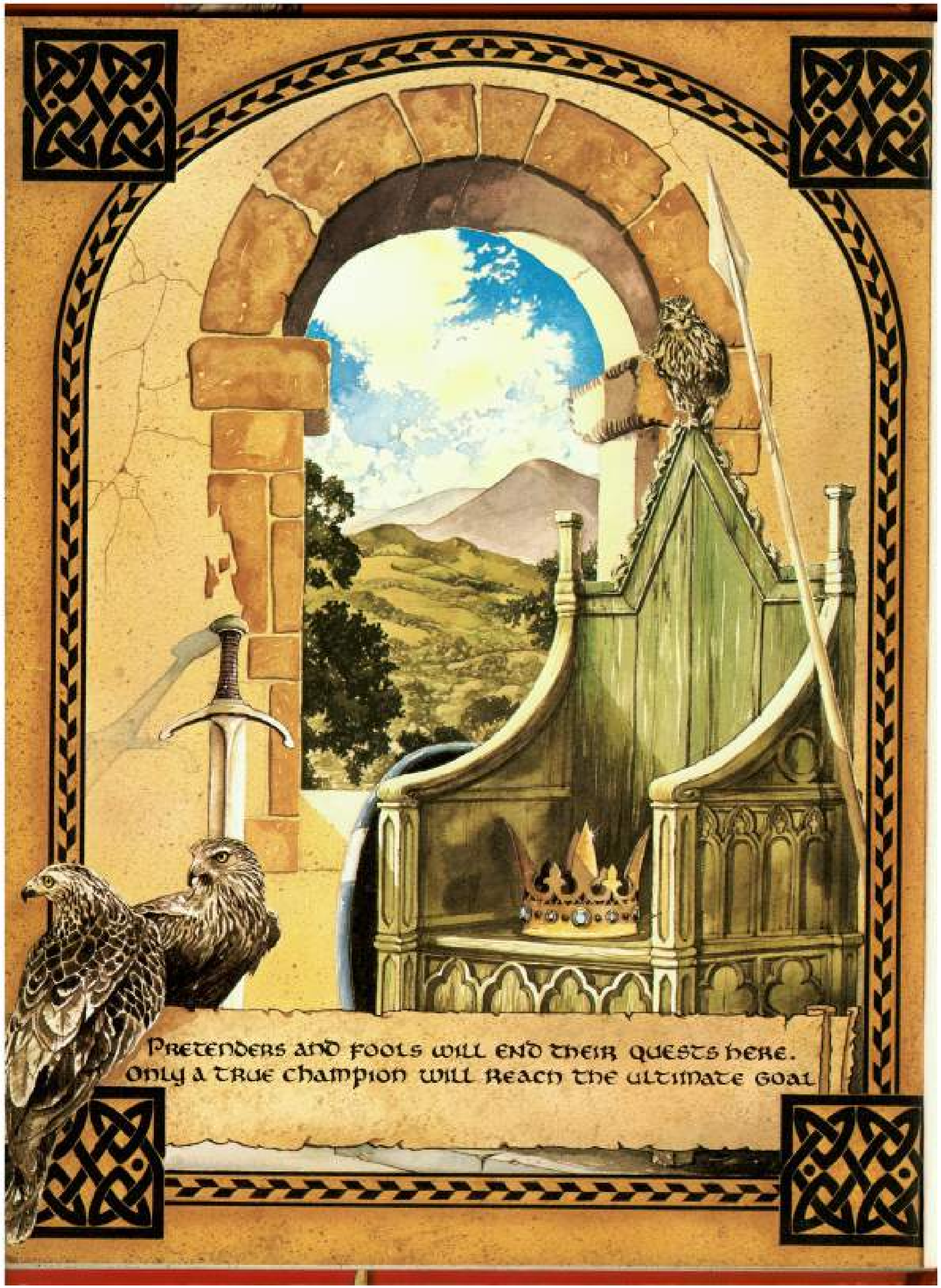




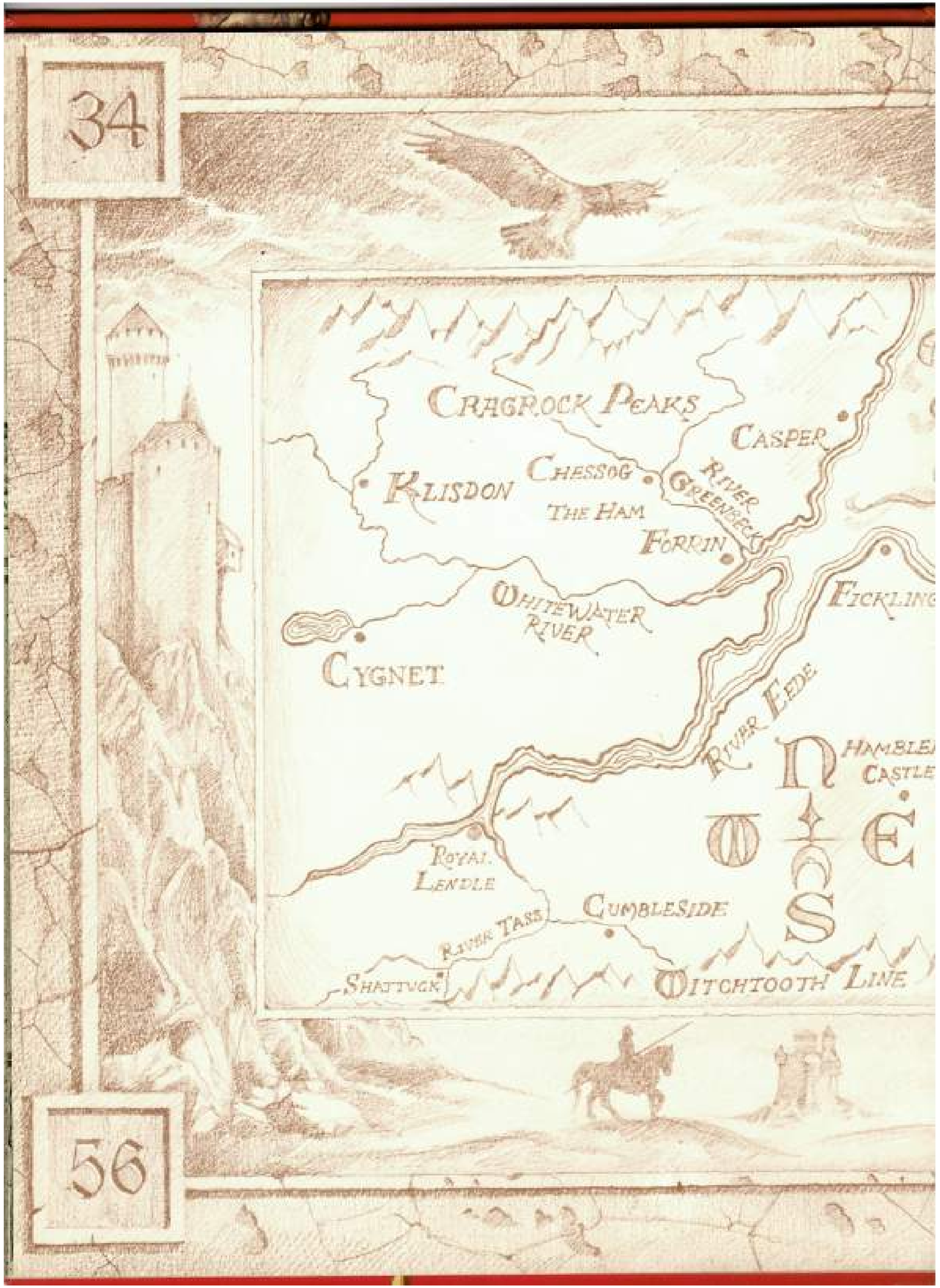
"I Tantalon, have left this life
My war-torn kingdom cursed with strife
One hope remains, a champion bold
Will rid the troubles taking hold
Your tasks are done but one more quest
Remains to prove you truly best
The answers to the tasks you've done
Have all been numbers; if they're summed
The starting point you then will find
And through a runesearch you must wind
So search your rune with open eyes
And open mind, if you be wise
But if your tasks be incorrect
Their sum, in error, will reflect
This fact, as you will find no stone
And thus shall stay the truth unknown
A hunter with no bow may help
This task too trying for a whelp
Mark not his word as it appears
Instead seek what will fade with years

If you find the runetrail true
Then your reward is overdue
For if you solve this last runesearch
Your honour is the highest perch."

Tantalon of Gallantaria.



Pretenders and fools will end their quests here.
Only a true champion will reach the ultimate goal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CRAGROCK PEAKS
CASPER
KLISDON
CHESSOG
THE HAM
RIVER GREENBECK
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FICKLING
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RIVER EEDE
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SHATTUCK
WITCHTOOTH LINE
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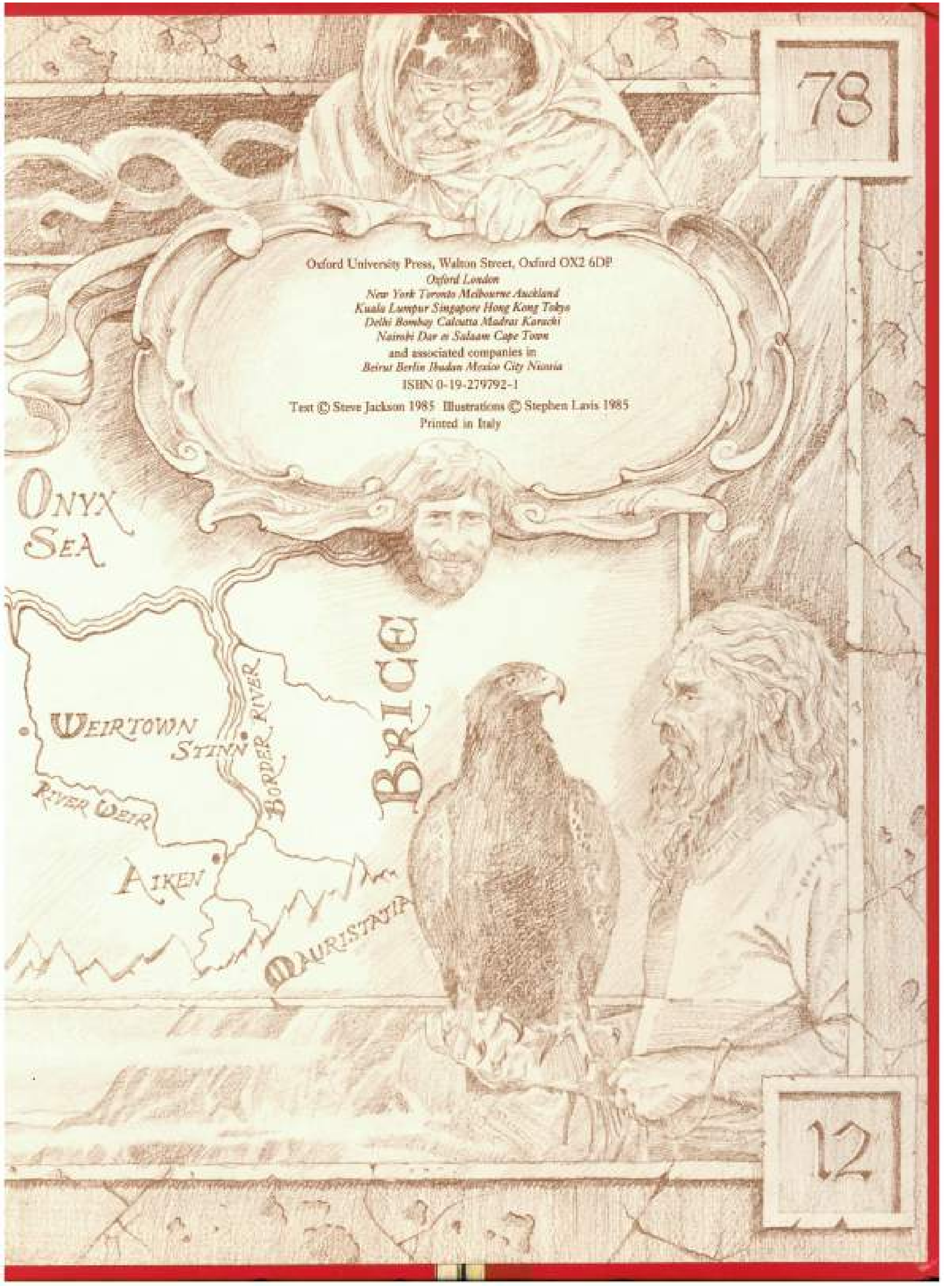

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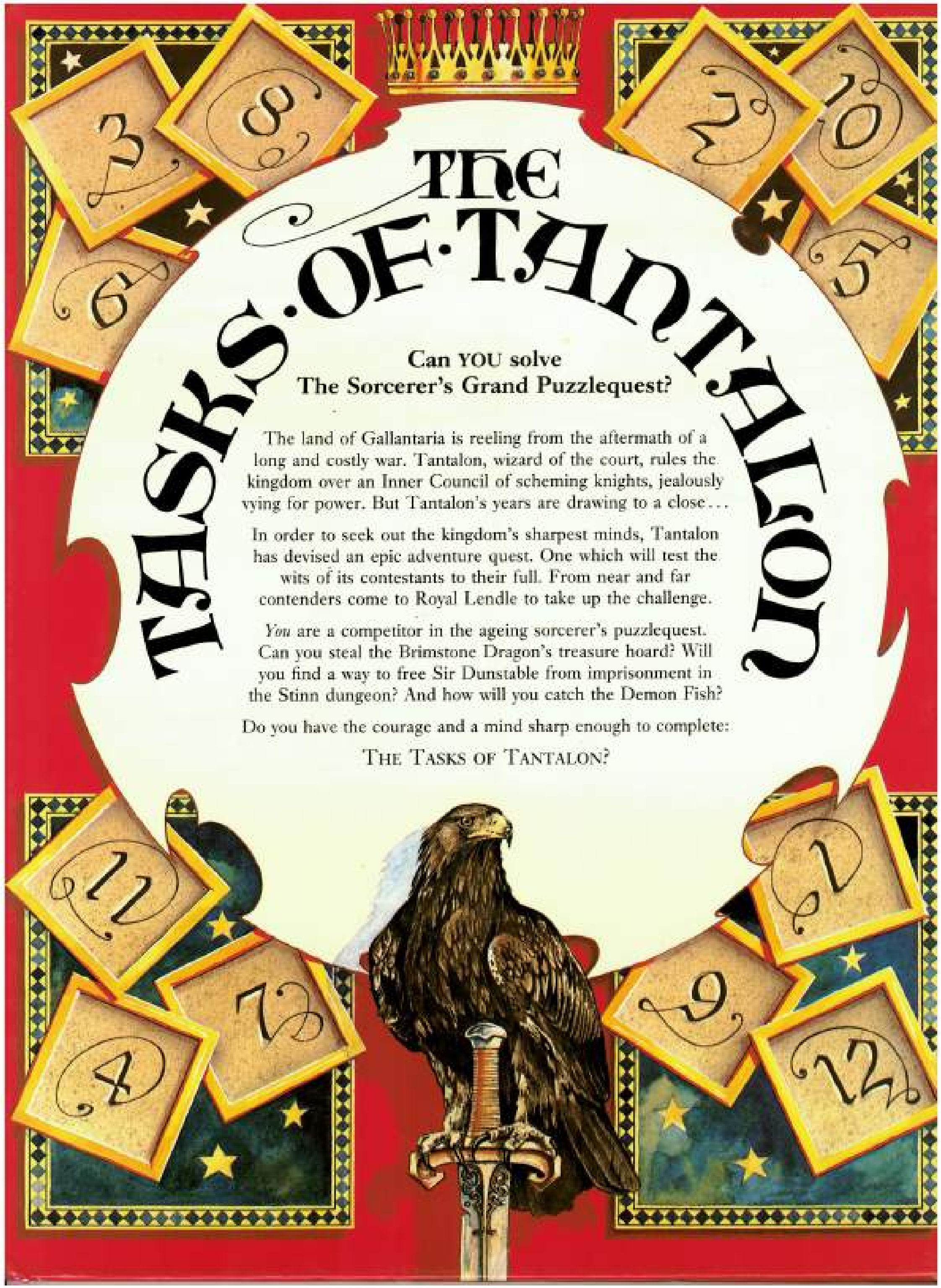


THE TASKS·OF·TANTALON

Can YOU solve The Sorcerer's Grand Puzzlequest?

The land of Gallantaria is reeling from the aftermath of a long and costly war. Tantalon, wizard of the court, rules the kingdom over an Inner Council of scheming knights, jealously vying for power. But Tantalon's years are drawing to a close...

In order to seek out the kingdom's sharpest minds, Tantalon has devised an epic adventure quest. One which will test the wits of its contestants to their full. From near and far contenders come to Royal Lendle to take up the challenge.

You are a competitor in the ageing sorcerer's puzzlequest. Can you steal the Brimstone Dragon's treasure hoard? Will you find a way to free Sir Dunstable from imprisonment in the Stinn dungeon? And how will you catch the Demon Fish?

Do you have the courage and a mind sharp enough to complete:

THE TASKS OF TANTALON?

TANTALON'S SECRET REVEALED!

The original *Tasks of Tantalon*, published in 1985 by Oxford University Press, is a fantasy novel-cum-puzzle book in which the reader is an adventuring hero in the sinister land of Gallantaria. After a devastating war which claimed the lives of Gallantaria's King and Queen, the country is being ruled by Tantalon, Grand Wizard of the Court. There is no heir to the throne and, as old age begins to take the sorcerer, a successor must be found. Tantalon decrees that his successor will be found through a challenging series of twelve Tasks.

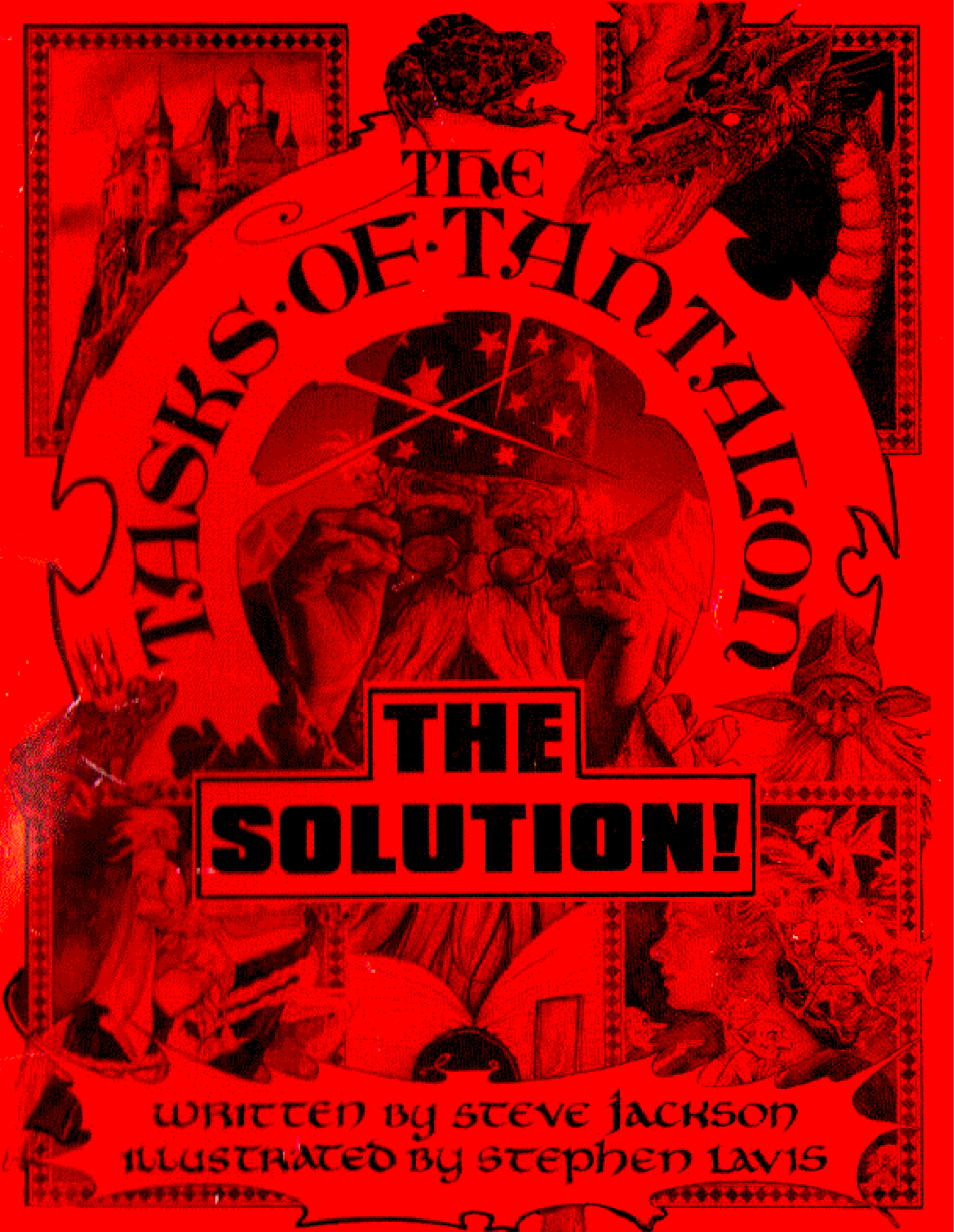
The book itself offers no clues to help task-solvers. The solution to each Task is a number. If the numbers are added together, readers must then embark on a 'Runesearch' which will check if their total is correct, but this involves discovering the ultimate secret of the book; a clever technique which has never been used before in publishing.

In response to the many readers who have written in asking for hints, Steve Jackson has prepared this booklet to take them through the Tasks in two stages. The majority of the booklet is a series of hints to enable readers to solve the Tasks for themselves. But on the last page, all solutions are given in full. With this booklet, would-be successors to the Gallantarian throne can check their answers and find out where they went wrong.

The Tasks of Tantalon
Hardback Edition published 1985 by Oxford
Softback Edition published 1986 by Pu

Tantalon's Secret
(c) 1987 Steve Jackson
Published 1987 by Workshop Productions
Printed in England

GAMES WORKSHOP
£1.00



THE TASKS OF TANTALON

THE SOLUTION!

WRITTEN BY STEVE JACKSON
ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHEN LAVIS

TANTALON'S SECRET

Please read this first:

This booklet is arranged in two parts. The bulk of the text is a sort of 'Hints Sheet' which attempts to answer most of the questions that readers may have had about the puzzles in *Tasks of Tantalon* if there had only been someone to ask. In this way readers can refer to specific Tasks and attempt to solve them without having all the answers revealed.

But for those who have well and truly "spent as much time on this infuriating book as they are ever going to," the complete solutions are listed on the last page.

I suggest that readers staple or sellotape the last page of the book to the inside back cover in order to avoid accidentally glancing at the answers. Only if you are well and truly stuck should you then break the seal and look at all the answers.

(c) 1987 Steve Jackson
Published by Workshop Productions

THE TASKS OF TANTALON

The Tasks of Tantalon began in early 1983 when David Fickling, an editor from Oxford University Press, approached Ian Livingstone and myself about the possibility of writing a couple of *Fighting Fantasy*-style books for younger children with limited choices and no dice but using full-colour illustrations to make the books attractive. This did not interest me at all as I had no wish to write for 'younger children'. But the idea of using full-colour illos did have its appeal if they could be used not so much as packaging to make the book look attractive, but instead as essential features.

The idea of puzzles came up and I considered the Labours of Hercules in Greek mythology. Hercules was set 12 Labours by King Eurystheus. These involved slaying monsters, cleaning out filthy stables, fetching the Girdle of Hippolyte and so on. But this story had already been told. The idea of a similar story within the world of Fighting Fantasy had possibilities and I set to work on planning out the puzzles.

On a memorable train journey from Edinburgh to London in June that same year, I came up with ten of the twelve Tasks. Some were variations on a well-known theme (eg. the Ting Ring), some were adaptations of obscure puzzles that had impressed me in the past (eg. the Princes of the Ham) and others were entirely new (eg. the River Eede and the Demon Fish).

With these ten puzzles, David and I set to work on finding an illustrator. Everyone I knew was either booked up or could not afford to commit themselves to what was to turn out to be a 2-year project. David eventually introduced me to Stephen Lavis who was excited about the idea and we spent several pub lunches in enthused discussion about the nature of the book, which had now become known as *The Tasks of Tantalus* (later this was changed to Tasks of Tanta*lon* when we discovered a character from Greek Mythology called Tantalus.

In the end, Stephen contributed significantly to the design of some of the puzzles. When the hardback was published in September 1985, we were all proud of the result. The illustrations made the book a work of art. The Tasks, though not easy, worked well, and the final secret - the mechanism by which readers could test whether they had solved the book correctly - was perfect.

But since publication in 1985, I have had hundreds of letters from frustrated readers wanting hints or wanting to know the solution. Personally I feel it is a bit unfair to leave readers hanging on, not knowing whether they are along the right lines or not. But no publisher would publish such a book of solutions as it is not really an economic proposition. So I took the job on myself.

I hope it helps solve your problems.

Steve Jackson

Further copies of this booklet can be obtained by sending £1 plus a large stamped, addressed envelope (overseas orders £2) to:

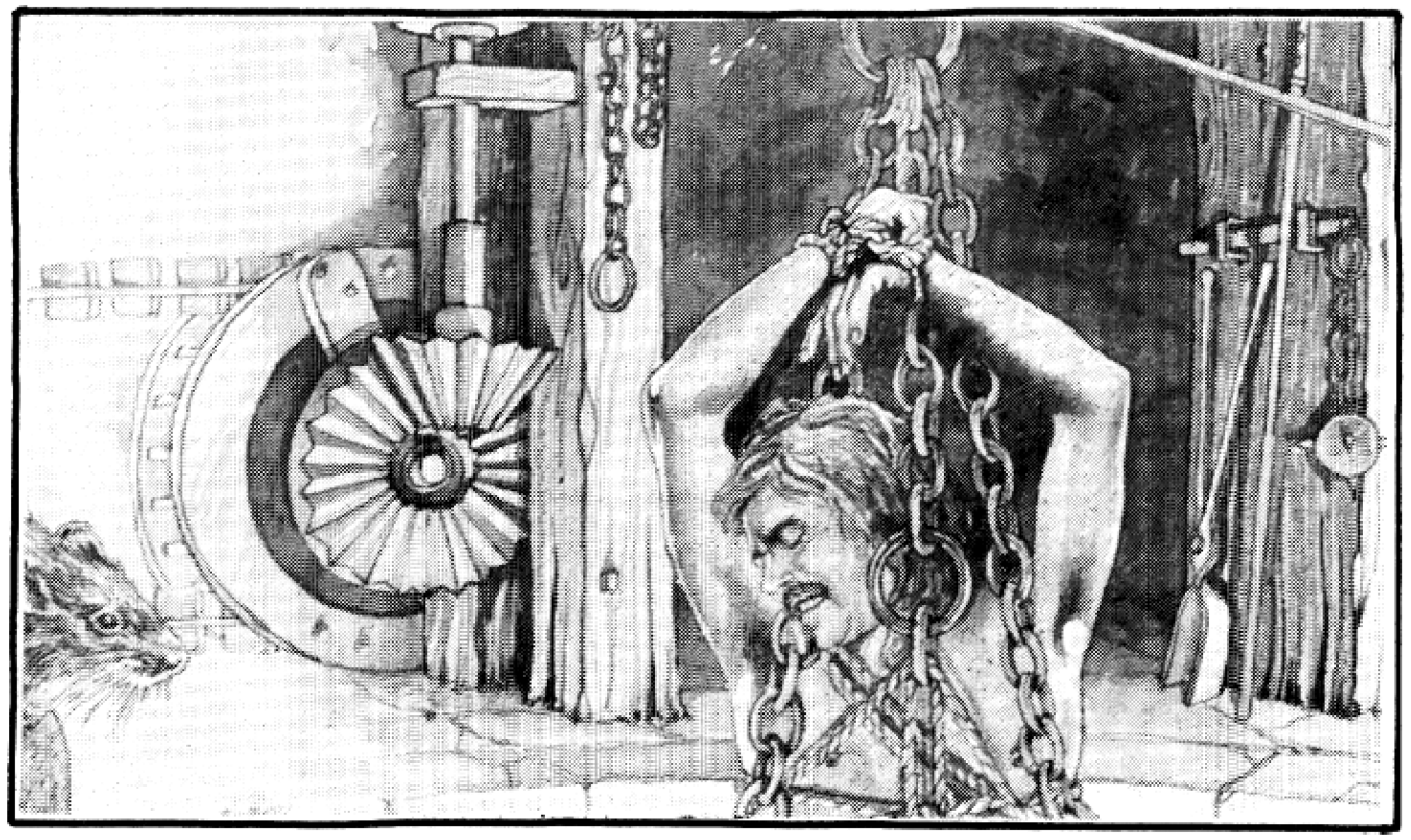
Workshop Productions
c/o Games Workshop, 1 Dalling Rd, London W6 0JD

1. "Release Sir Dunstable..."

Stephen Lavis did a tremendous job with this one (this and the River Eede are my favourite illustrations in the book). If you could see my original rough sketch for the cogs and pulley system, you'd see just how well he did!

There is no magical secret here. It's a straightforward question of following the cogs, ropes, pulleys and belts to see how they shift when the lever is moved. For example, if you move the lever to position '5', this pulls the rope attatched to the bottom of the lever. Following this round the pulleys you can see that it will cause the wheel (to the left of the lever) to turn anticlockwise. This will result in the rope which stretches over the lever being pulled to the left, turning the small wheel anticlockwise. The small wheel is attatched by a belt to a larger wheel which will also turn anticlockwise. At the other end of the axle is a toothed wheel and, as this turns anticlockwise, the larger wheel above it turns clockwise, drawing the belt around it and so on.

The 90 degree cogs are a little more difficult to follow but eventually you will reach the coil of rope which suspends Sir Dunstable over the flaming pit. It is at this point that you realise you have forgotten which way you moved the lever to start with...



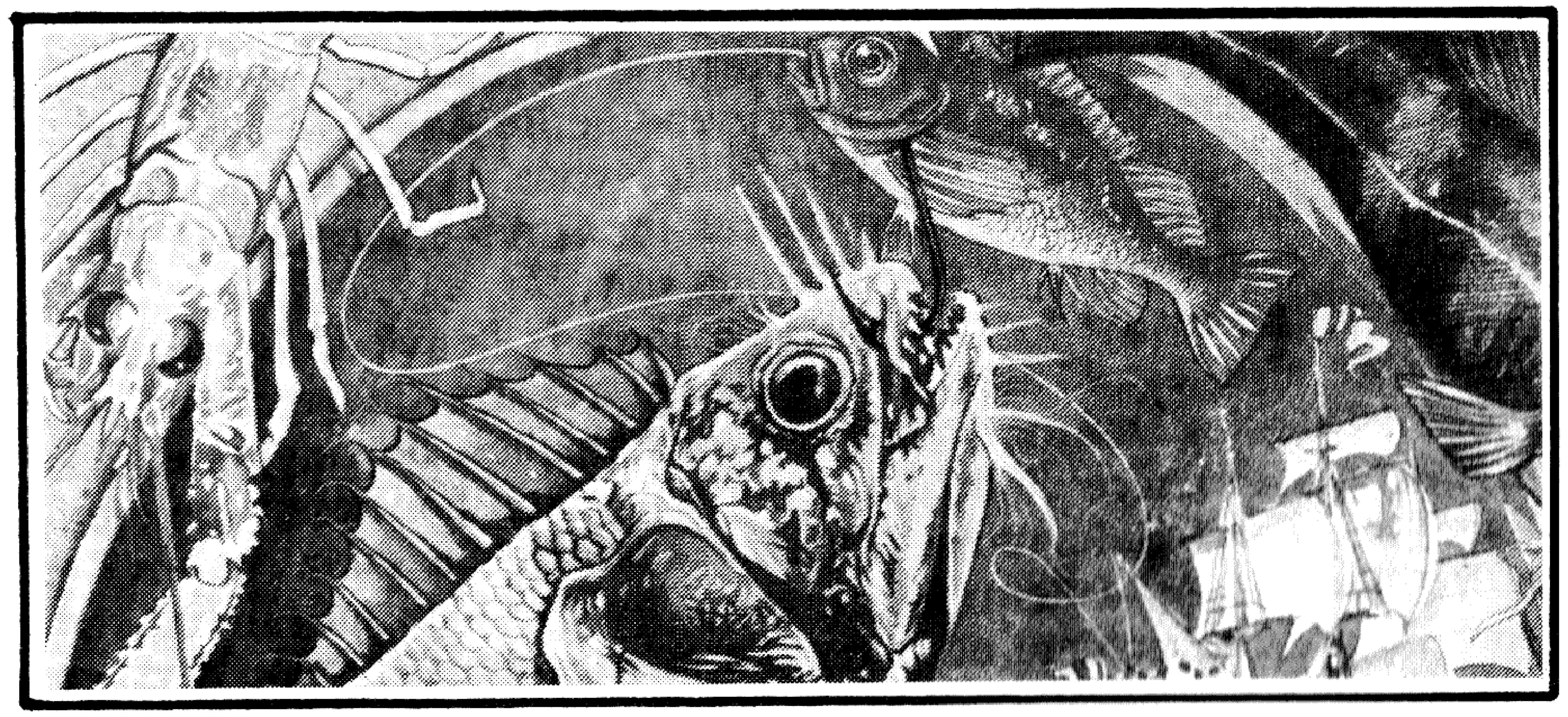
2. "The Demon Fish..."

I must admit that this puzzle was something of a disappointment when I saw the art. My original conception was along the lines of a cross-section through the sea with a fishing boat floating on the surface and dozens of fish and other sea-creatures swimming round in the water eating each other. Stephen's artistic interpretation is interesting and his technique is excellent, but he ended up leaving out about 75% of the food chain I had designed, leaving the puzzle too easy to solve. (What? You disagree?)

The illustration shows a series of food chains, with various creatues eating each other. The Crab in the bottom right-hand corner eats the Zebra Fish which in turn eats the little grey striped fish and so on. The Demon Fish (shown eating an oversized Goldfish in the centre of the picture) can thus be caught by first catching an oversized Goldfish. But you are not offered 'an oversized Goldfish' as bait, merely Flies, Meat, Worms and Minnows. Thus you have to use your bait to catch a fish which can then be used to catch a fish further up the food chain which will lead to the oversized Goldfish and eventually snare the Demon Fish.

Pretty straightforward, really. Especially if you follow the food chain backwards. There is a small twist at the end which explains the reason for the... XXX. No I'd better not give too much away. I'll give you a cryptic crossword clue instead:

XXX = "Underground plant stem or colonial insect (9)"

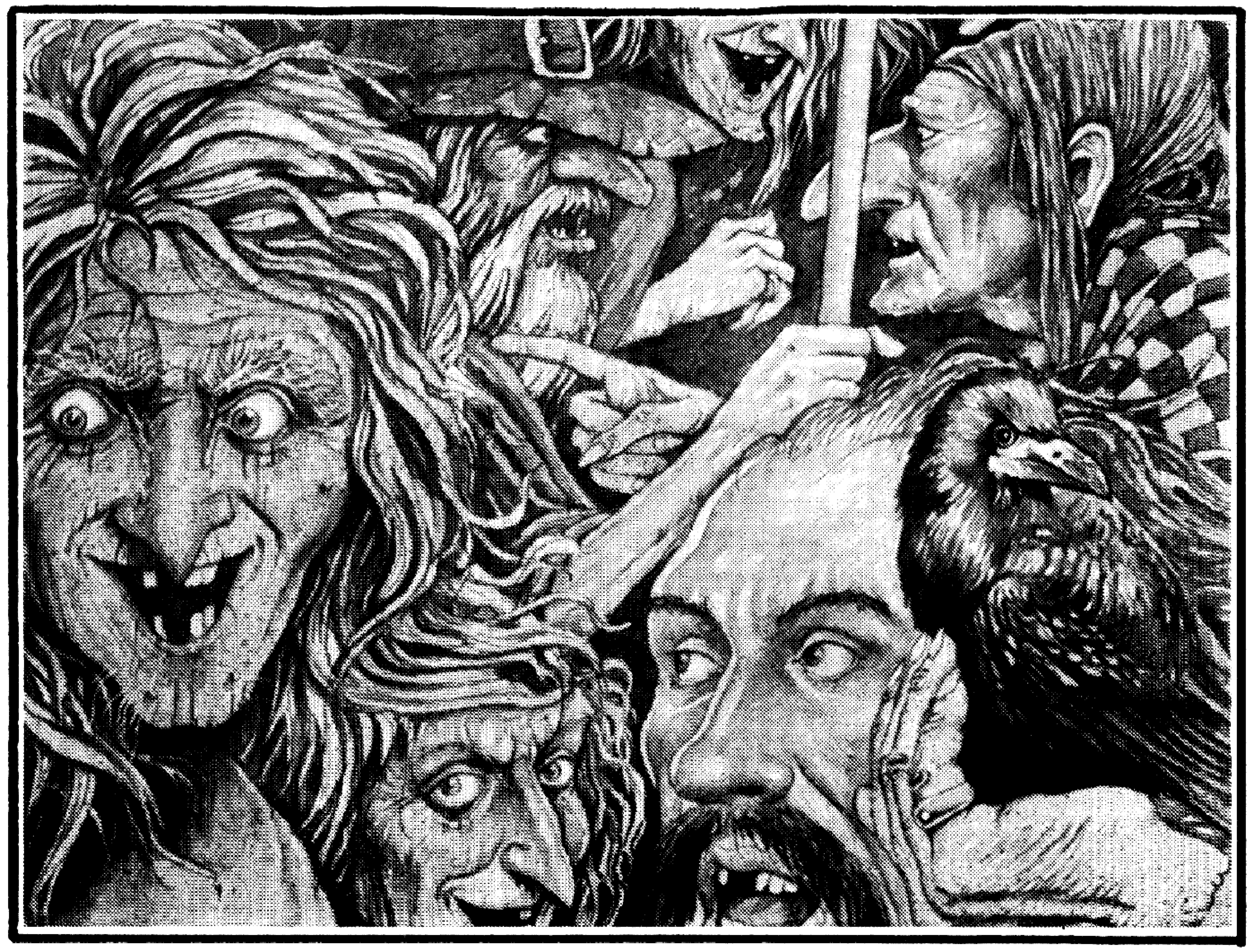


3. "The Hag-Witch of Wiertown..."

This one's a bit sneaky really. I daresay you've all tried counting the Hag-Witches and then got stuck wondering whether the four Hag-Witches round the border and the one looking over the parchment should be included.

The answer is yes. They should be included. The only other things to watch out for are Hag-Witches with teeth missing, balding heads, etc. (these don't count). Also the Hag-Witch's ring is significant. Look at the Crow in the bottom-right. Since this puzzle is a little confusing, I will give the answer. Subtract the lowest number to be found on the Runes on the Sir Dunstable page from the next lowest.

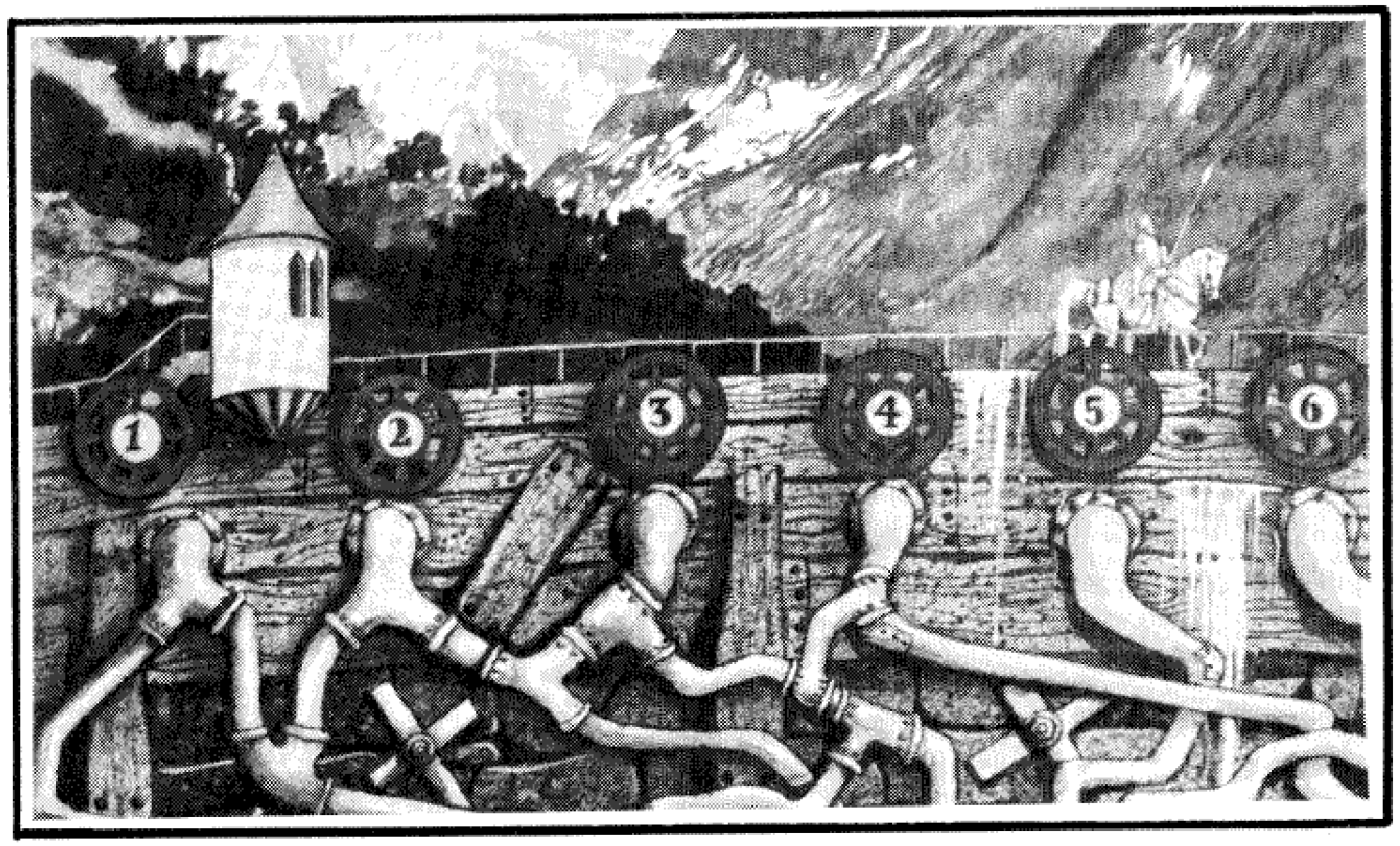
Incidentally, Stephen Lavis drew himself in the Weirtown market. He is standing by the game stall, wearing a blue tunic and clutching a red sword. He also drew yours truly on the frontispiece (Oxford University Press Hardback edition only). Tantalon is looking down at me over "The Land of Gallantaria" title.



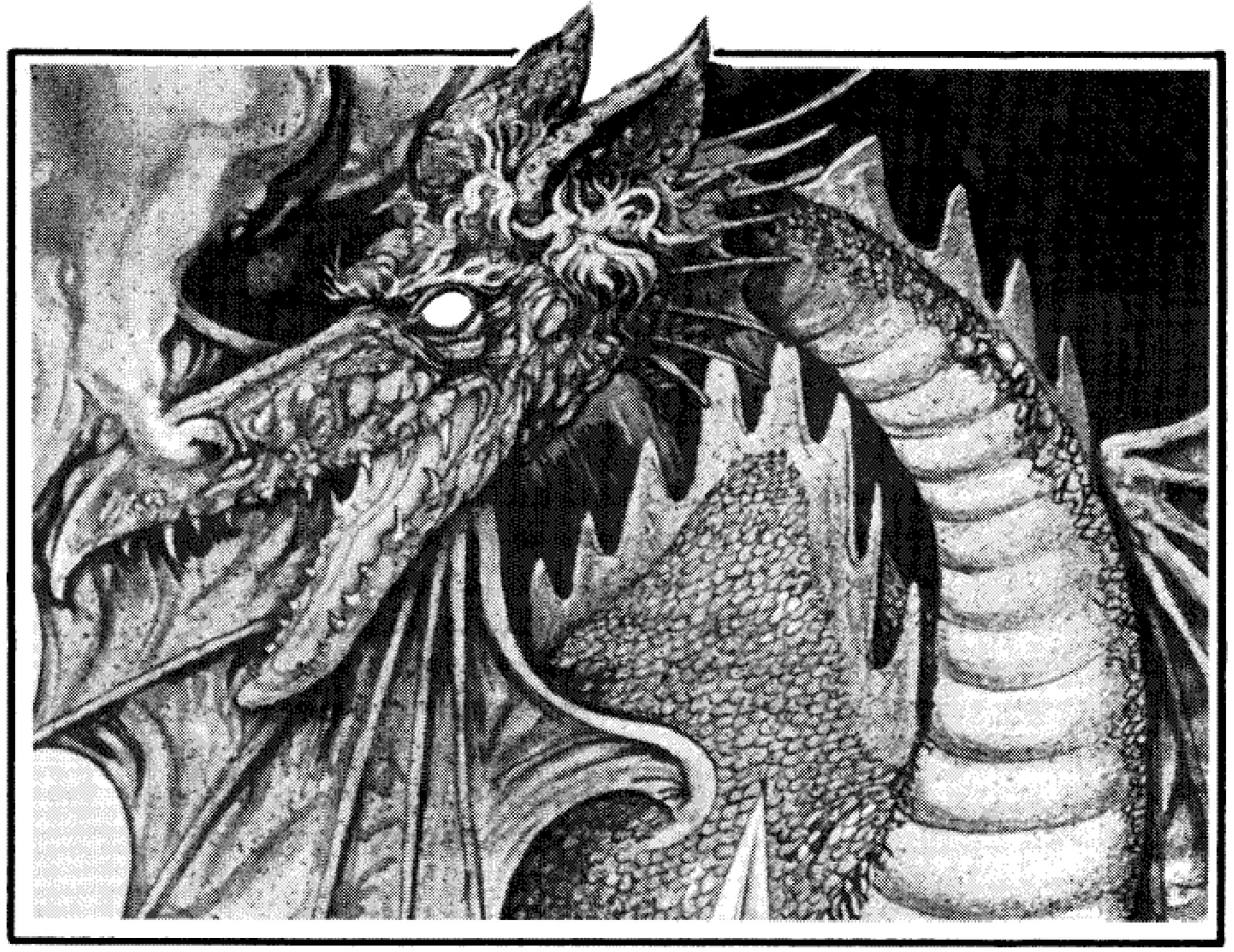
4. "The River Eede..."

A marvellous piece of construction, eh? The puzzle itself is not really all that difficult and from the letters I've seen, most of you got this one. All it takes is for you to study the connections. There are *three* valves open. Each open valve will let water flow down through its pipe. If the pipe reaches a join, the water will continue to flow downwards but the stream will be split. One of the nice features of this picture is the 'boiler, tap and gutter'-type construction in the middle of the tangled mess of pipes. At the last minute, I realised that this actually gave the game away (ie. water was definitely coming down this pipe) and Stephen had to hurriedly paint in a connection between pipes four and three (you can see it's a slightly different colour) to confuse the issue.

The easiest way to approach this is to pick the two 'dry' outlets and follow them back. If, for example, you follow the third outlet back, you can see that valve five must definitely be closed as no water flows through it. If you can eliminate some valves in this way, sorting out the junctions becomes much easier. Questions of the type: "Let's see... That means that either valve X and/or valve Y must be open." become: "Ah, but I know valve Y is dry, therefore valve X must be open."



5. "The Brimstone Dragon..."

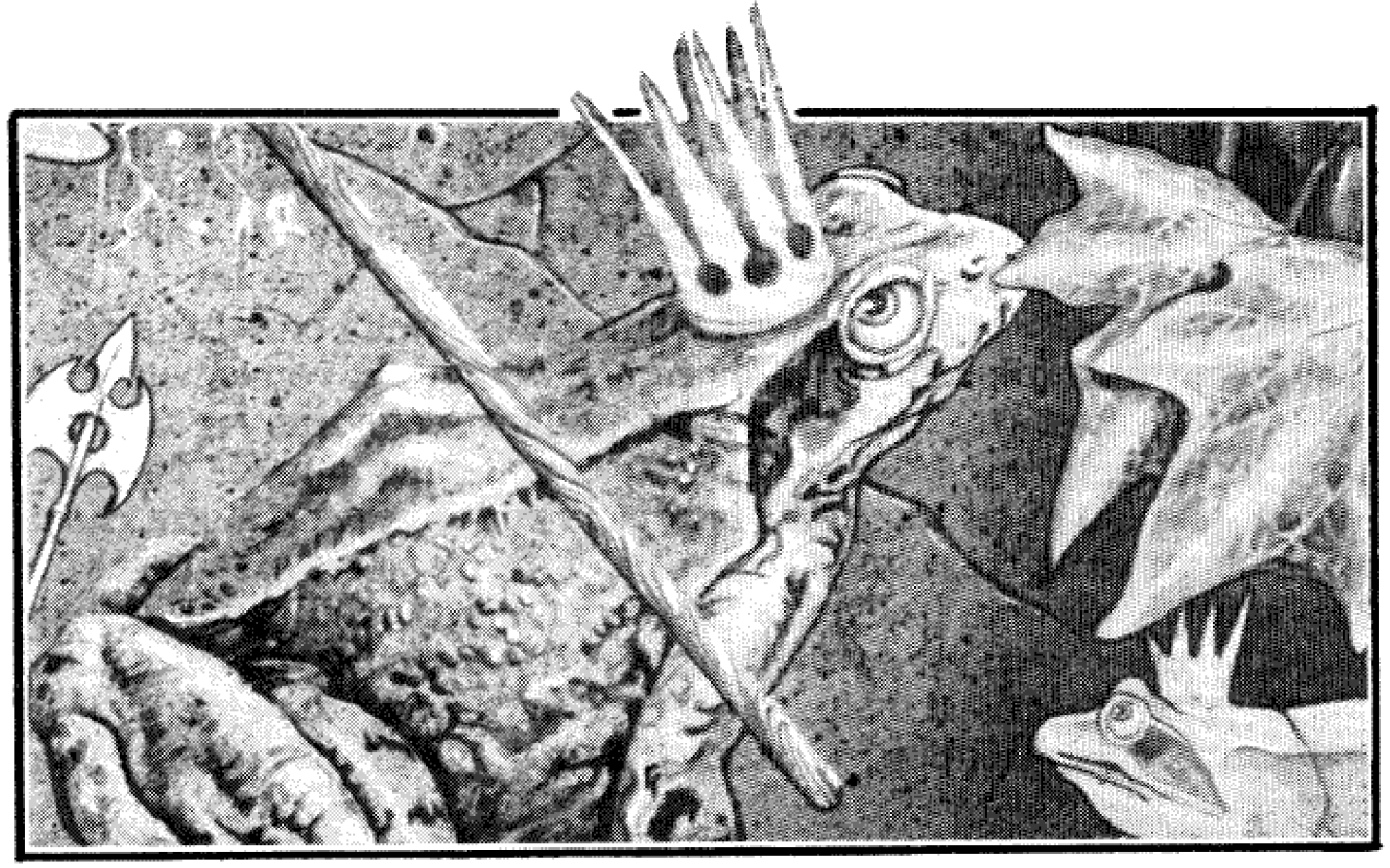


A real frustration, this one. I must admit I counted the gold pieces five times when I first saw the illustration and of those five attempts, I only came up with the correct solution twice!

There's nothing I can really explain about this. You simply have to count all the gold pieces you can see including those ones you can only just see a hint of. Rather than have you try once more, I'll come straight out with the answer: 102.

Stephen and I did have something of an argument about this illo. In my opinion the Dragon looked much too cartoon-like as if it were saying: "Aha! What have we here then, chaps?" My solution was to white out the Dragon's eye, which I did on a photocopy with some typewriter correction fluid. The result was a much more menacing, Fighting Fantasy-style Dragon. But in the end Stephen either forgot or refused to do it! Anyway, it doesn't affect the puzzle which I'm sure caused lots of near misses in readers' final solutions.

6. "The Princes of the Ham..."



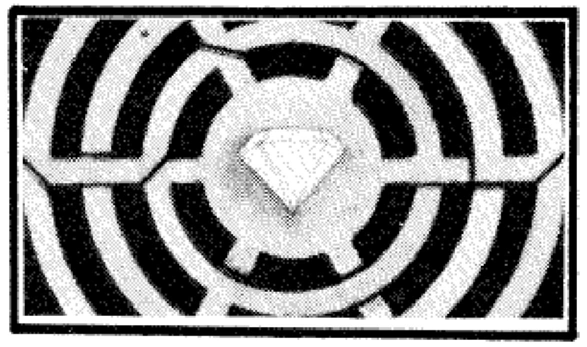
I think this one turned out more difficult than it ever should have been, simply because readers couldn't quite get the hang of what they were supposed to do!

The inspiration for this one came from an old pub puzzle. You line up eight coins along a line. Four 'Heads' are placed to the left and four 'Tails' are placed to the right, with a single space between them. The object is to move the Heads to the right and the Tails to the left to end up with a mirror image of the starting set-up. Each coin can only move in one direction ie. the Heads may only be moved to the right and the Tails to the left; they may never reverse directions. A coin can move only either:

- Into a vacant space directly in front of it, or
- By *jumping over a single opponent* into the vacant space beyond.

Just below the main illustration you will see a plan of the starting set-up. The Frog-Princes are to the left and the Horntoads are to the right, with a space in the middle. Try the puzzle on this plan with coins as described above and see if you can work out the solution for yourself. As a hint, the solution is greater than 10 moves and less than 20. In fact you will find that there is only one way of solving it. Remember, the frogs and toads can never leap backwards.

7. "The Regent's Jewel..."



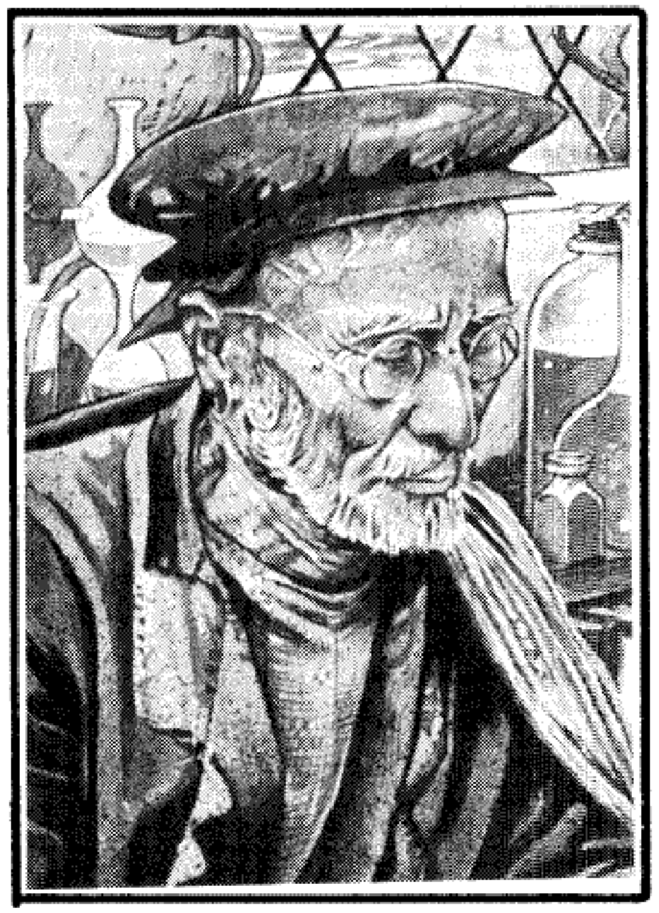
The solution to this one is in two parts. First of all you must try each of the four maze entrances to see which lead to the centre, where the Regent's Jewel is kept. You will find that more than one of the entrances lead to the centre.

"But only one path is unguarded." warns Fagorn. "The others are all lain with deadly traps... The Orb of Shantos, fashioned in crystal, knows the secret of the minotaur's passages. Its advice will lead you safely to the creature." An example of the Orb of Shantos is given at the foot of the page - but it isn't the right one. There is no entrance with four stars. You will have to find a similar Orb, and these are scattered through the book.

8. "Seek out the Ting Ring..."

This was the first illustration Stephen did for the book. Superb detail, isn't it? But to this day I still don't know why he put those little Goblin creatures in the top right. Anyway, a great picture, and quite a difficult puzzle. When I first saw it (I had simply asked Stephen to 'hide the ring somewhere in the picture'), it took me a good ten minutes to find the Ting Ring.

I perhaps ought to explain that there is something of a 'trick question' here. If you need a further hint, it is in the bottom half of the picture.



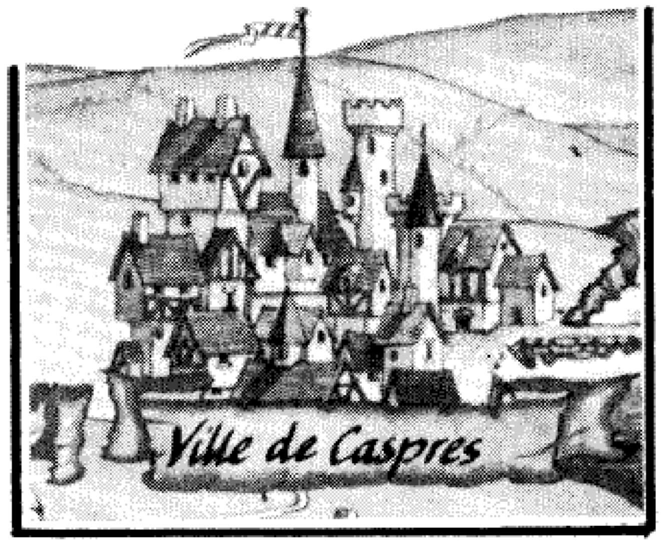
9. "King Tag of Casper..."

This is, I think, the most difficult of the puzzles, though you'll kick yourself when you discover the answer. It's the sort of thing that you may struggle for hours over - days even - or you may get it within a minute!

I'll start with two important clues. First, this is a problem in lateral thinking; it is not like the other puzzles in the book. Secondly, the illustration is almost unnecessary. Not totally unnecessary, but it misleads more than it helps. The main parts of this puzzle can be solved just by reading the text. There are many confusing anagrams on the map. Are the 'Catgrapes Vineyard' and 'Carp's Gate' clues? Tag is in exile, living underground - is he then in the Disused Mines? Lady Davina is decribed earlier in the book as being 'ailing'. Have they gone to the Healing Well? The answer to all these questions is NO!

Let's go through the text: "On fleeing from Casper, *King* Tag met the Lady Davina, his *Queen* at a secret rendezvous point due north in the shadow of Mount Cuspid. Together they rode southwards through the night to Eacham Abbey to meet their friend and spiritual guide, the *Bishop* of Eacham. A faithfull ally, the Bishop escorted them three days later to Greycloud Manor, home of Sir Niebling, *Knight* of Eacham. But even their friend was forced to turn them out when, two nights later, a band of loyalist vigilantes were scouted to the north."

That should give you a big enough hint. Then you must draw imaginary lines down the map and across it to join up the numbers round the border. Tag's final hiding place will then fall neatly into one of the squares thus formed. You then read off the co-ordinates and add them together. If, for example, you concluded that it must be 'The Town of Casper' the co-ordinates would be 4 (North-South) and 5 (East-West). Added together, this makes 9. Which is *not* the correct solution!



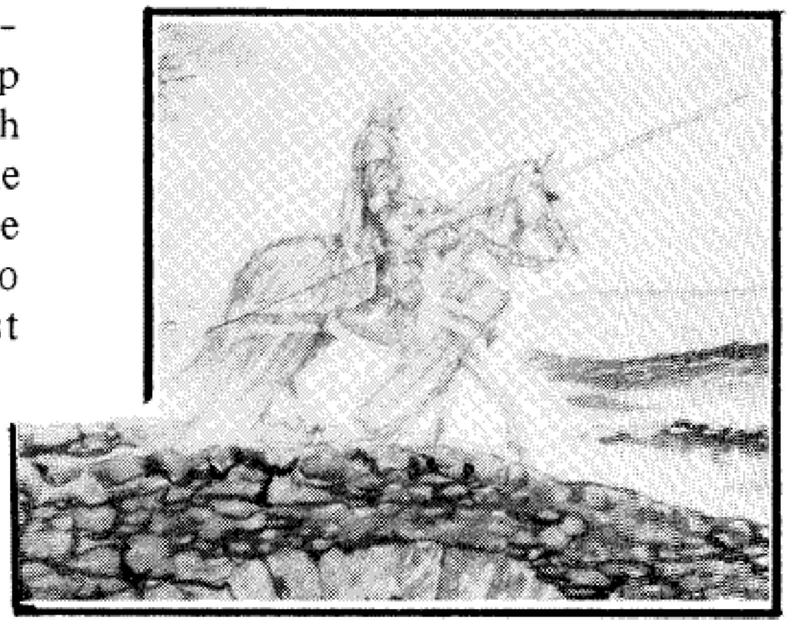
10. "The Golden Cross from Hornhelm's Crown..."

This is another puzzle that Stephen put his own interpretation to and improved greatly. Originally, the idea was to have an illustration of the view as you arrive on Windswept Moor, with a Treasure Map in your hand. Stephen instead drew a mysterious picture of Hornhelm's Spirit. But in fact the effect is perfect. Most of the puzzle can be worked out from the map, but the illustration is essential for getting your bearings.

"From the tallest tree on Winswept Moor..." Which is the tallest tree? Perhaps you might think you can see which is the tallest tree on the map, but this is either wrong or a coincidence. The map does not tell you which is the tallest tree, so the only way of solving the puzzle is to try each of the clumps of trees in turn, follow the instructions, and eliminate those starting points that don't work. It may be that with certain starting points, you end up wandering off the map. With others you may complete the directions and end up nowhere near a bush - remember that to find the treasure you must "...dig under a bush."

So from the tallest tree you walk towards the nearest path, follow it to the right, turn upstream at the bridge... *Upstream?* Which way is upstream? Here the illustration on the facing page will help you. The bridge you reach may not be at this particular location, but you will certainly learn which way the rivers flow. Continue upstream until you reach two building directly in line. Then turn eastwards. Which way is eastwards? Again, the illustration will help - remember you have arrived on the Moor at sunrise.

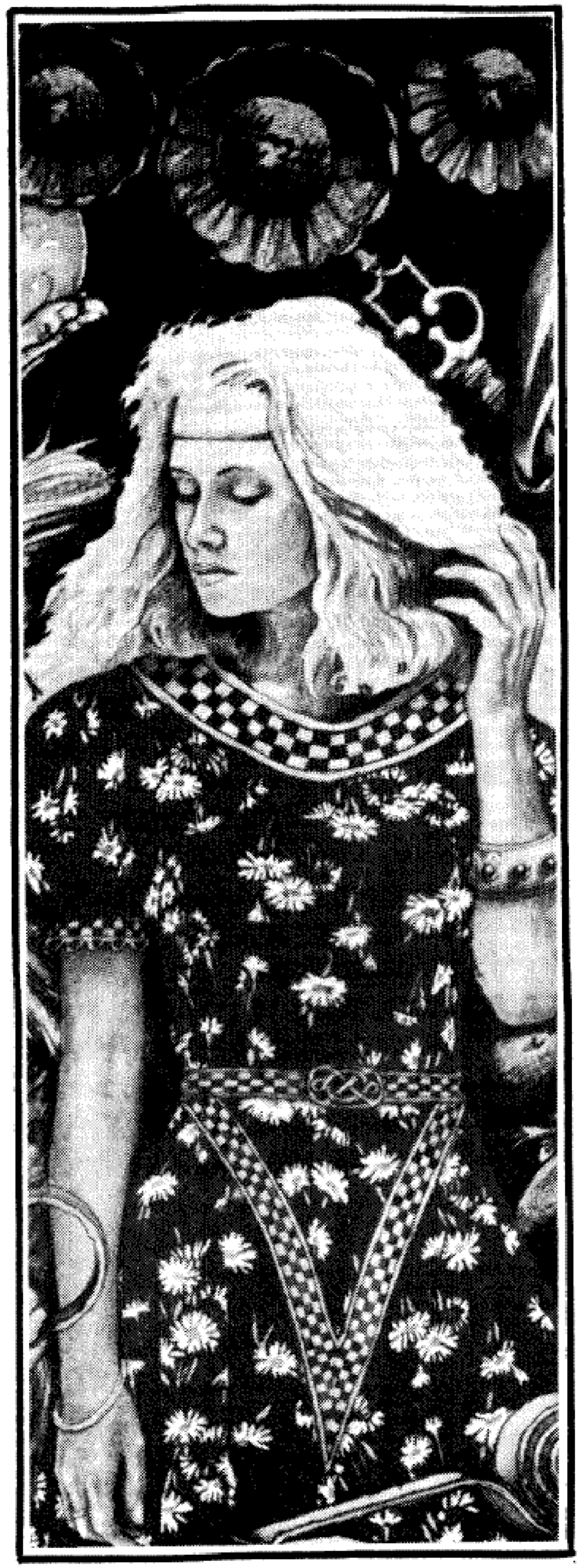
If you follow the instructions for each of the clumps of trees, only one will lead you to a bush. Once you have found it you can count how many trees there are at the correct starting point. So how many trees grow *next to* the tallest tree?



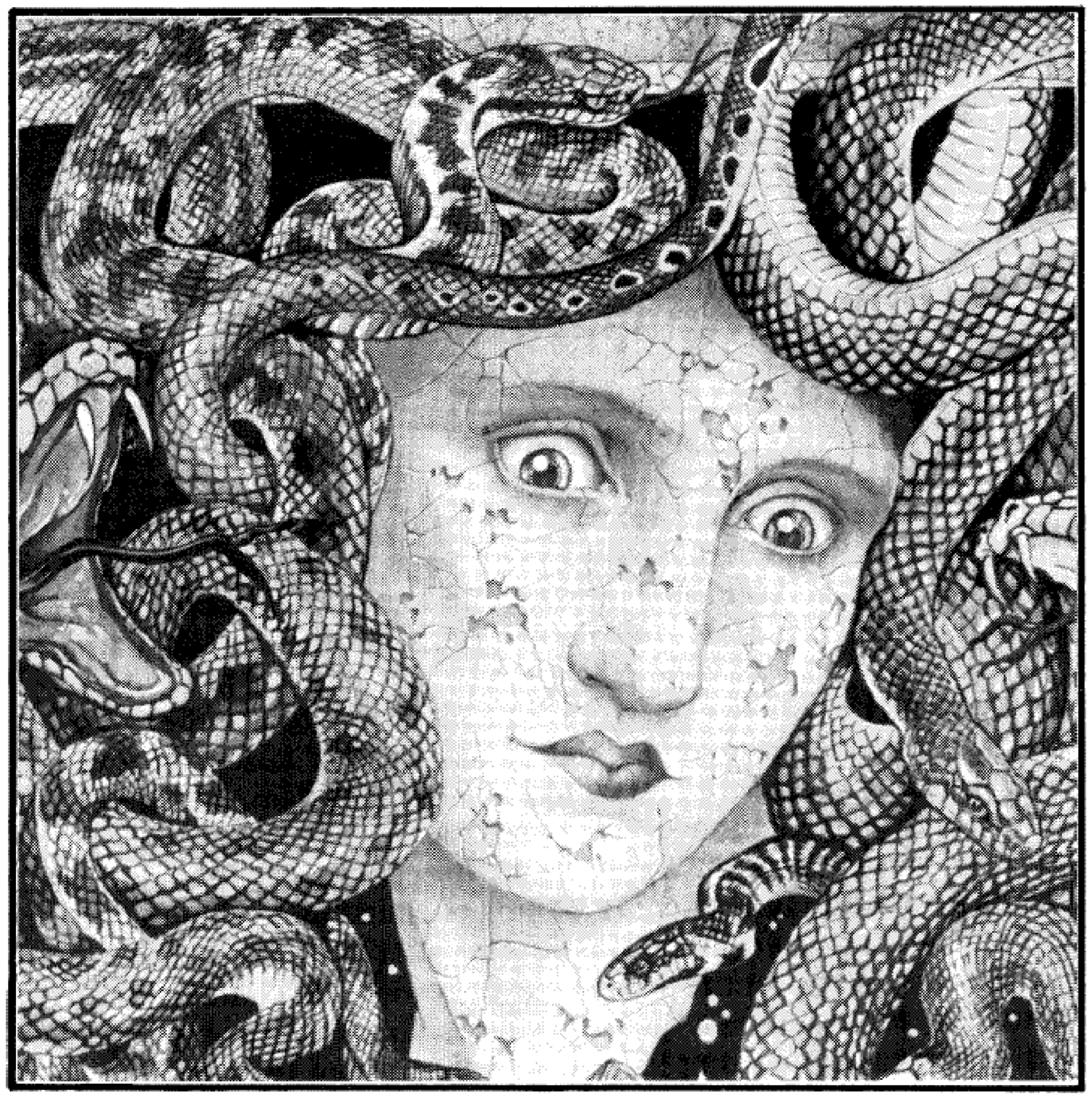
11. "Release Cassandra..."

I remember this one well; it was the last one Stephen did. I spent several hours trying to explain how the lock mechanism I had devised for the Tower worked. It was an elaborate affair with a combination lock which affected the tumblers so the key could pass through. I even made up a cardboard model from an old cornflakes packet to demonstrate! But Stephen remained confused. In the end, he came up with an alternative design which was very much simpler but worked perfectly. This is it.

No great mystery about this one. At the foot of the page you can see exactly how the lock works. As the key turns, its blade passes through a simple template that prevents the wrong key from working. The small inset drawing illustrates the arrangement and should give you an idea of what the blade of the key must look like to pass through. All you then have to do is to locate the key (Hint: it is not on that page). Each of the keys in the book has a number on its shaft.



12. "Free good Sir Duke..."



From the seven petrified knights, you must work out which one is Sir Duke. The clues which will allow you to identify him are scattered throughout the book and you must track them down.

The first time Sir Duke is mentioned is on the first page of the story: "Finally it was the bearded Sir Duke who suggested that the Crown be held by Tantalon..." If Sir Duke is bearded, that rules out statues number 17, 13, 12 and 67, leaving numbers 14, 78 and 23 as contenders. Your final choice can be narrowed down by a trail of clues which begins during conversation with Chauncey the Dwarf, continues in Fickling and ends up... No - you should be able to follow it through now.

13. The Runesearch

My original plan was to end the book with a message from Tantalon which simply said something like: "Have you fared well on my Tasks? If so add up all the numbers of your solutions. If this sum totals 235, you have completed The Tasks of Tantalon." This was okay at the time, but I was a little concerned that, if we used this ending, the book would finish with a whimper rather than a bang. It was David Fickling who happened to mention a technical possibility which I seized on as being the perfect ending.

Some of you may have discovered this by accident; I know of at least two people who did. But anyway, the original idea was worked into *The Runesearch.*

Most readers reached Tantalon's scroll and floundered about hopelessly trying to fathom out what should be done. Let's go through Tantalon's message:

"...The answers to the tasks you've done, Have all been numbers; if they're summed, The starting point you then will find. And through a Runesearch you must wind."

As explained above, the first thing to do is add together your solutions to all 12 Tasks. Then you must find the Runestone with that number.

"So search your Rune with open eyes. And open mind if you be wise."

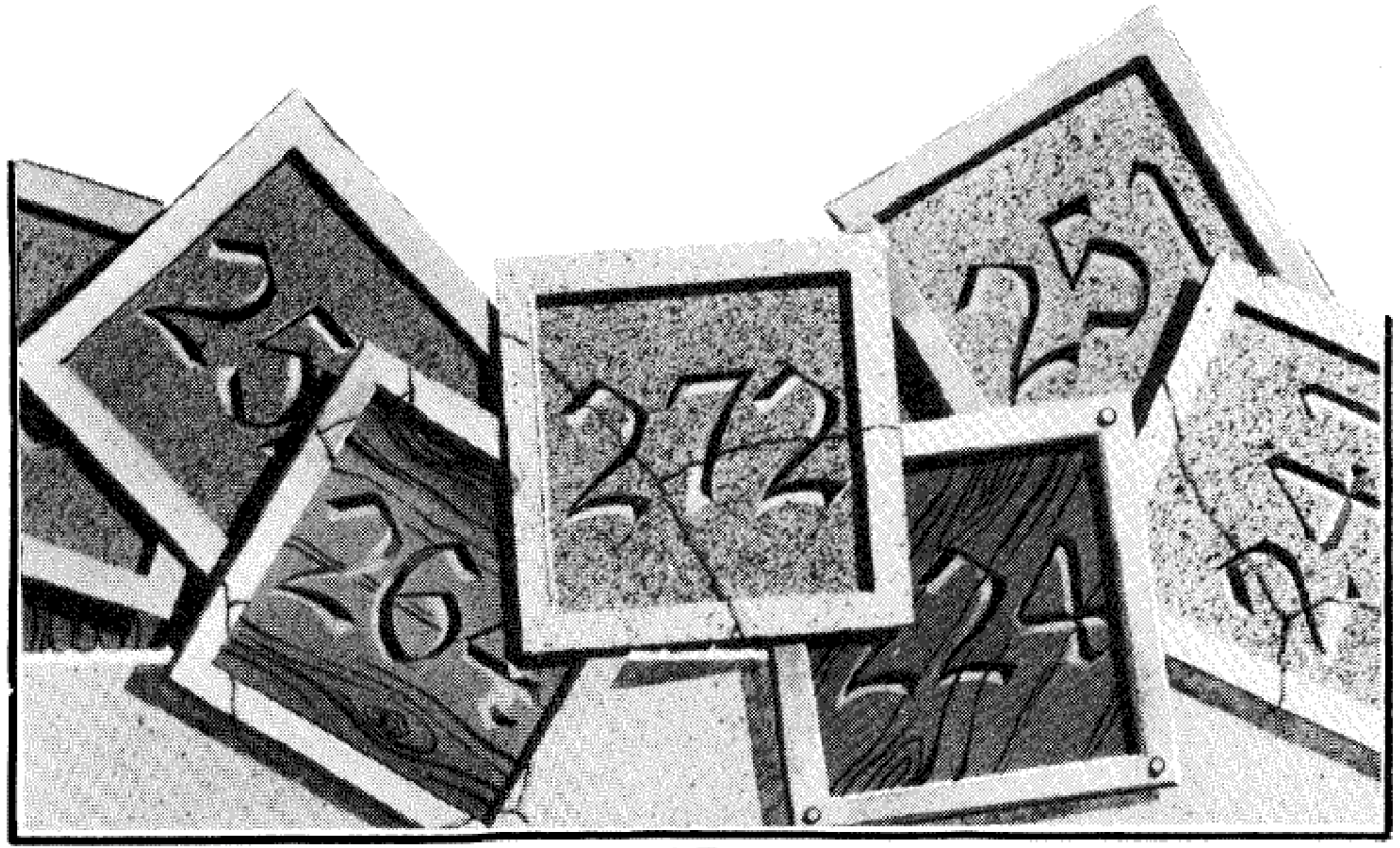
Find the Runestone that corresponds to your total. If you cannot find one, your total is wrong. Now somehow this Runestone is the starting point for a 'Runesearch', whatever that may be. It looks like an ordinary Rune. What are you supposed to do with it? Skip the next couple of lines which tell you that a wrong total means no Runestone, until you reach:

"A hunter with no bow may help; This Task too trying for a Whelp. Mark not his word as it appears. Instead seek what will fade with years."

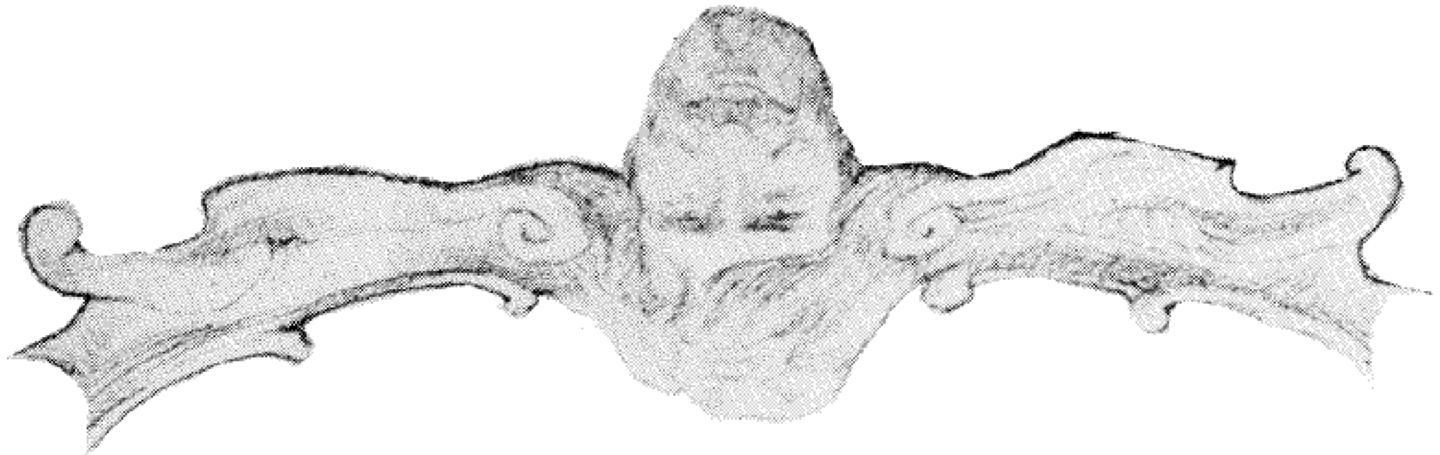
Right. A hunter with no bow? Is this a sword-carrying knight? An animal of some kind? No. You will find the bowless hunter at Fickling. Which task is too trying for a whelp and who is the whelp? A whelp is a youngster; a stripling; a nipper; *a whippersnapper*. And what task was the whippersnapper faced with? *Supervision*. '...supervision of the verminpit.' But we must 'Mark not his word as it appears. Instead seek what will fade with years.' What fades with years? Amongst other things, sight - or *vision*. The Fickling fisherman's clue is *Super Vision*. Which is what you'll need to embark on the Runesearch. And the same clue was given already in Tantalon's message: '*So search your rune with open eyes*, And open mind, if you be wise.'

If this makes no sense, you'll just have to go straight to the back page and go through the answers. But if something has clicked, you will already be progressing along your Runesearch. And if you've solved all the Tasks correctly, you will have no trouble reaching the end of the Runesearch when you must find the Sword of Justice and the Crown of Courage. These are identified to you in the same way as the Runes.

I leave it to you to complete the quest and locate these objects for, now you know the secret of the book, this should be no problem. No problem, that is, except for hardback readers. I couldn't resist a final twist! The Crown of Courage is is slightly more difficult to find in the hardback edition.



SOLUTIONS



1. Move the lever to position five to free Sir Dunstable.
2. The food chain ends with the small silverfish, which is shown on the Cormorant's flag eating a fly. The cost is thus six Copper Pieces.
3. There are thirteen Hag-Witches in all.
4. The three open valves are three, four and seven. The total is thus fourteen.
5. The Brimstone Dragon guards one hundred and two Gold Pieces.
6. A total of twelve hops will allow the Princes to hop free.
7. The correct entrance is number five.
8. The Ting Ring is on Morphus' test tube rack. It has no stones.
9. This is a lateral thinking problem. Think laterally of a chess board. King-Queen-Bishop-Knight-Castle. The answer is Gambit Castle. The co-ordinates are five (E-W) plus one (N-S) equals six.
10. The correct starting point is the group of five trees towards the bottom of the map, just left of centre. Upstream is walking up the page and the east is the bottom of the page. The answer is four.
11. The key to release Cassandra is number fifteen, which you will find in Sir Dunstable's dungeon.
12. Sir Duke has an identical twin who has been sent to Weirtown and can be seen in the picture. The answer is fourteen.
13. The correct total is 196. Rune 196 is on the Ham Princes page (bottom left). Along the left-hand side of the runestone you will find a message written in tiny writing which you will need a magnifying glass to read and you can set off on your Runesearch. The Sword of Justice is held by Tantalon (without his hat) on the riverbank with the Spirit of Hornhelm. The Crown of Courage is on the back cover. If you have the hardback book, the final message is only printed on the book itself; not on the cover jacket.

Salafi Publications

Minor Signs of the Day of Judgement

Abū ʿIyāḍ Amjad Rafīq (حفظه الله)

- The obligation of believing in everything that is authentically reported from the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), whether we understand it or not.
- The purpose/benefit of knowing the signs of the Hour.
- A mention of some of the minor signs of the Hour:
    - The slave girl will give birth to her master.
    - The naked, barefooted, destitute herdsmen will compete with each other in building lofty buildings.
    - People will be given positions they are not fit for.
    - Knowledge will be lost/removed and ignorance will be widespread.
    - The abundance of killing.
    - Alcohol/intoxicants will be drunk and will be given a name other than their true name.
    - Abundance of zinā (fornication).
    - Men wearing silk.
    - Making lawful musical instruments and singing.
    - Making lawful the freedom to commit zinā (open promiscuity).
    - People will take female singers.
    - Al-Khasf, al-Qadhf and al-Maskh.
    - Emergence of obscenity and evil use of the tongue (foul language).

- Cutting of the ties [of kinship].
- The liar is treated as truthful and the truthful person is treated as a liar.
- The mosques being taken as places for visiting.
- Sudden death.
- General tribulations: knowledge being removed/withheld, increase in earthquakes, emergence of tribulations, widespread killing.
- Knowledge will be sought from the aṣāghir (lesser/lowly ones).
- Years of deception.
- The Ruwaybiḍah (a foolish person who speaks on affairs that affect everyone in society) will speak.
- People will only give salutations to those whom they know.
- A person will not be too concerned with lawful sustenance.
- The various markets will merge.
- The people will compete in building mosques and mutually boast with each other about the beauty and embellishments in these mosques.
- A person will wish to see the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) due to the widespread tribulations that will be present.
- The religion will become very strange.
- Stinginess will be thrown into the hearts of the people.
- The people will kill each other for no apparent reason.
- The number of police will increase.

- A man will be put forward to lead the prayer not because he is the most knowledgeable but because his voice is the most beautiful.
- People will take the Qurʾān as amusement.
- People will be able to buy whatever judgement they seek (bribery).
- The honour/sanctity of blood will become meaningless.
- A woman will partner with her husband in trade/commerce.
- The noble, upright people will be put down and humiliated and the lowly, ignoble people will be raised.
- A person will wish/crave for death due to widespread tribulations.
- The land of the Arabs will return to being green pastures and rivers.
- The people will commit open fornication in the path like donkeys.
- A man will pass by a masjid and not pay two rak'āt within in.
- A man will arise in the morning as a believer and reach the evening as a disbeliever, and a man will reach the evening a believer and arise in the morning as a disbeliever, and people will sell their religion for a portion of the world.
- The swallowing of an army by the earth.
- People will increase in eagerness for the world and increase in distance from Allāh.
- People will kill their relatives and neighbours.
- The intellects of the people will be removed. Many of them will think they are upon something yet they are upon nothing.
- There will be thirty liars/false claimants to prophethood.
- The death of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

  - The conquering of Baytul-Maqdis (Jerusalem).
  - A type of death that will take the people just as a herd/flock of sheep catches a disease and they all perish.
  - A tribulation, the most severe part of which will enter the house of every Muslim.
  - The value of money will be little.
  - The Romans will prove treacherous with the Muslims (just prior to the major signs).
  - The new moon will increase in size.
  - Wealth will increase and become abundant.
  - Lying will become widespread.
  - Time will contract.
  - Speech will become abundant but actions will be stored away like treasure.
  - A people will be dictated to, besides the Book of Allāh, and no one will show any rejection to that.
  - Obscenity and miserliness will become widespread.
  - There will emerge ribā (usury), zinā (fornication) and khamr (taking of intoxicants).
- A detailed look at the Dajjāl:
  - The place from which he will appear.
  - His physical description.
  - The tribulations he will come with.
  - The time at which he will appear.
  - The four mosques he will not be able to overcome.

  - The length of time he will spend upon the earth.
  - The place he will settle and the only city he will not be able to enter.
  - The youth that will confront him.
- Two groups from the ummah that Allāh has protected from the Fire.
- The descent of ʿĪsá b. Maryam (عليه السلام):
  - The place and time of his descent, and a description of how he will descend.
  - His physical description.
  - What will happen when the Dajjāl looks at ʿĪsá b. Maryam (عليه السلام) and the place at which ʿĪsá b. Maryam (عليه السلام) will fight and destroy the Dajjāl.
  - What will occur after the Dajjāl is killed and the Muslims are given victory.